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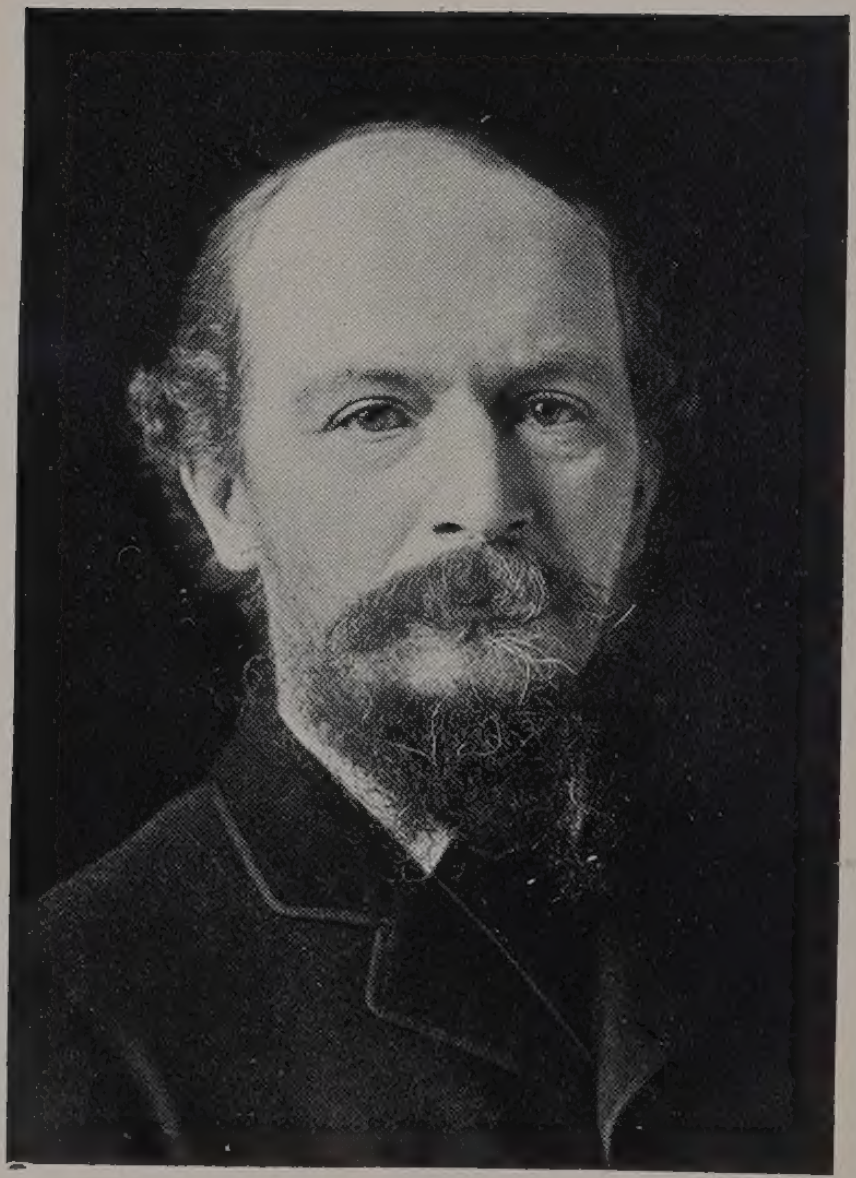

TALES FROM TEN POETS. BY HARRISON S. MORRIS

IN THREE BOOKS
THE THIRD BOOK

WITH PORTRAITS
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

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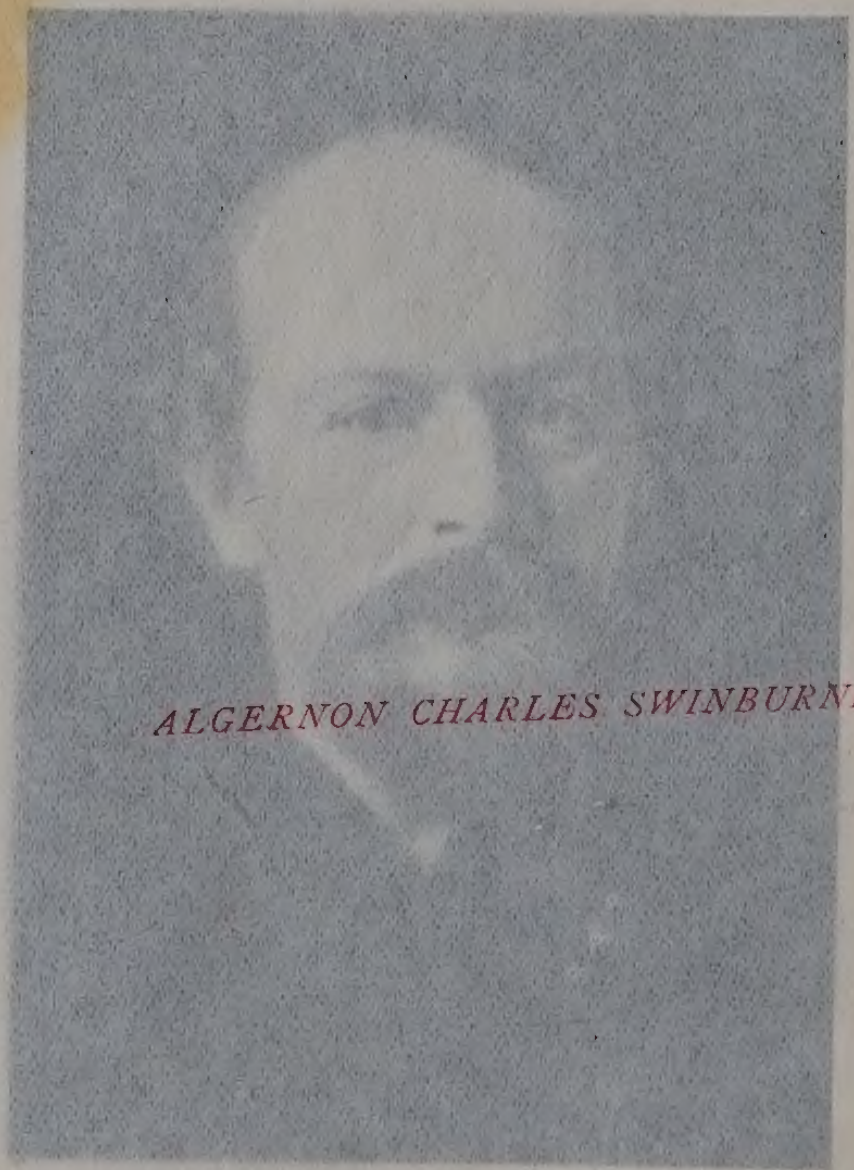

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

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TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.

I.

About the mid-days of spring there came from the castle-built shores of Ireland a fair ship, which sailed southeastwardly for Wales. It passed Lyonesse and Carlion, now hidden in the deep tides, and tacked onward to the windy heights of Tintagel. Above its stem shone a gilded swallow, with straight wings, and eyes made of glittering gems, which seemed flying oversea to bear the green summer with it through the air.

On the deck, at dawn, between the rowers, sat Iseult, gazing with full face at the gradually strengthening light. She was fairer than foam or dawn. Her look was very glad, and her face was lovelier than any love could desire. Her movements were past thought and speech, and her hair was more golden than the sunrise. Her bright flesh was made as of moonbeams, and her eyelids shone like snow beneath the sun, while through their clouds of deep lashes

welled up the springs of unimaginable eyes. Her lips were meek and passionate, for love sat upon them like a shadow. The glad, clear cheeks and throat, and the tender temples, had a maiden blush upon them such as a lily might show if a rose's blood beat in its heart. From slight foot to slender head, the whole fair form swayed like a flower, and whatever her light hand leaned on grew scented with blossoms.

Gazing at Iseult was a sunlike face, which to her, through all the wreck and change of time, was to be the star of her living soul. Love had not yet written his language in its lineaments. It was smooth and mighty, without a scar, for the youth had nothing of grief about him saving his name, which his mother, dying as he was born, made out of her sorrow and chose for him even as his young eyes smiled upon her. His name was Tristram; and now, clothed with youth and might, he bore it as a glad witness, the second symbol of the world's fame.

Tristram was renowned and of good fortune, and in his face shone a lordship of joy. He moved through the morning like the morning itself. Song sprang from his lips and from under his harp-playing hands. The maidens who gazed on his fervent fingers as they swept the strings, thought how often they had borne

part in the dark onset of war; how often those lips, whereon the song now burned, had flung battle-cries above the swing and shriek of the swords. And the memory of the unhappy queen to whom his life had been death, made their love sadder and stronger towards him.

Now in the changing accidents of time and fight, chance had cast this fair youth on the green Irish land, which the sky and sea love and wrap round as with hands and wings. There in a lucky hour he came to the king's court, and dwelt for half a season harping in the hall, and teaching the new craft of music to maiden hands that for his sake are famous in all countries. Yet there was no love between them, for their fate awaited its appointed hour, and showed neither bloom nor sting. But once, being vexed with some past wound, the king bade Tristram take comfort of sweet baths, and for his honor bade Iseult watch him as his hand-maiden, and ease his hurt with holy remedies which were made by her mother's magic.

When Iseult saw the shape of the wound in his side, she knew that this was the knight who had overthrown all their prowess and left her kinsmen shamed on the field of battle. She would have slain Tristram, unarmed as he was, with his own sword, but he seemed so great and

fair that her heaved-up hand fell, and she did not smite him.

"What comfort shall this dead man be to you, Damsel?" said he, laughing. "Set not your hand near the toothed steel, lest the fang strike it."

"Yea, should the fang not strike dead the serpent that stung my uncle?" she answered. "You are his slayer, and half my mother's heart is bloodless through you, who made the veins of all her kin bleed through his wounds."

Then she bethought her how their violent chief had flung forth the bold word which challenged Arthur's best knight to do battle; and how, dying of his own wild mood, he had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal of his unhallowed brand, the venom and enchanted might of which had left the sign on Tristram's side. She stood reflecting on these things, and her wrath grew cool with her thoughts. Hatred could not long keep its fire kindled against him who lay there at her mercy. She passed softly from his sight.

After this, peace was made between them, and, through them, between two kingdoms. He went home with hands reconciled and a contented heart to bring about a truce between her father's realm and the land of Cornwall; and when full peace was at last made, he fared forth

again by the green straits to bring back Iseult as the plighted bride of his uncle Mark, the king.

So now with feast made and all the triumphs of parting done, Tristram and Iseult sailed eastward. But the queen, her mother, in her wise heart and subtle love, had foreseen the things that were to be, darkly as in a glass, and to prevent them, had striven to make some charm of marriage unison which should bind the heart of Iseult securely to her lord. She wrought with marvellous herbs and spells, brewing and blessing the mixture secretly with her hands. Then she drew it from her bosom and gave it to Iseult's chosen hand-maiden, Brangwain. She bade her hide the marvel, covered up in a golden cup, from the sight of all men, and when the last shout had died away and the last cup was drained about the bride and bridegroom as they were bound for bed, then should Brangwain say to the new-married bride that her mother, the queen, commanded her to drink the cup in union with King Mark. For her sake, no lip must touch it but theirs. It was hallowed for their mouths alone, and if a drop was lost, Iseult should hold that drop as dear as blood shed from her mother's heart. Having drunk, the two should be one heart forever. Brangwain swore to do this, and kept the hid-

den thing by her always, whether she waked or slept.

Now, all this having passed, Iseult and Tristram sat on the deck to see the sun rise again, whose light had looked on no such pair since Galahault, at rose-time, had brought Launcelot first to see Guenevere.

Tristram caught her eyes as she looked across at the dawn.

"As the new day brings daylight up from the dead, might not this face also bring the dead back to life?" he murmured.

"I pray you do not praise me, but tell me who there in Camelot has the name of being fairest next to the queen?" She asked this gazing where the sea was wan beyond the sun's path. "I would I were a man and dwelt there, that I might win better praise than yours,—even such as you yourself have; for your praise lasts, but ours,—for shame, where is it? Tell me, then, since women may not win a better praise, who has the most renown beside Guenevere?"

Tristram held in the laugh he would have uttered.

"Surely this is but a little praise to desire," he said,—"poor and little. But of the hapless ones whom love serves with bowed knees, none hath fairer face than Arthur's sister. The north seas call her Mistress of Isles. She moves even

yet majestically above the crowns on younger heads, and her eyes outshine all later-born loves."

"Is she taller than I?" asked Iseult. "Look, I am tall!" She struck the mast with the utmost reach of her hand. "And look, fair lord, now, when I rise upon my feet, how high I can touch standing straight up. Could this queen do so much as that? She must be overtall, then. Can it be that she is second in stateliness, where there are so many younger who are fair,—she, born before the lord your king, and having the third knight after Launcelot and you to serve her? Nay, sir, God made her, then, for a god-like sign."

"Ay, for a sign," answered Tristram. "Would God it were not so! for the planets never shine with half the fateful forecasting of her unfortunate face."

A smile rose to Iseult's mouth: "I am all the happier to have a face that brings men no such fate," quoth she. "Yet all of us who are born after her may praise her for good hap. She excels us no more in age than in men's love."

"God keep you better in his grace than to sit down beside her!" said Tristram, with a glooming light in his eyes. "For if men are not wholly blind whom God gives light to, and those do not lie to whom he gives truth, great grief shall come to her, and she shall give

greater. Merlin witnessed of her years ago that she should work and suffer woe beyond all the race of women. And yet her face takes the sense of men like a sunbeam. I think there is no herb or blood-compelling drink that would heal a heart ever made hot by it. Ay, and men that do not love her make no great marvel when they see the love between her and Lamoracke; nor do they look askance when he gazes after her. Clothed warmly with his love as she is, girded round with his worship, yet she seems at heart hungry and cold. She is ever sad, and loves not the light, for as night, whether clothed with stars or naked, is still night, so is she still sad."

Iseult's sweet eyes were sunken, and the mirth was dead in her look.

"Is it her shame for something done, or fear of something yet to be done, that so puts out the light from her soul?" she asked.

"Surely," answered Tristram, "I think it is some blind and unknown sin done when the summer flowed in her blood,—the season when a sudden wrong wrought out of vision and of desire leaps into life and never dies. Then came swift eyesight that touched the dark thing to death and made her mad with helpless knowledge. She knew what a sore life dead love must lead her through, and to what sure end;

and though her way has neither been sprinkled with blood nor her tears, and though she looks bravely, with her face fixed upon fate, yet she knows well the serpent hour lies ready somewhere to sting and spare not; ay, and he, Arthur——"

"The king," cried Iseult,—"does the king, too, live in fear? They say sin does not hurt a man so much as shame a woman; yet he also should take part of the penance, being more deeply set in the sin than she."

"Nay," said Tristram, "it fell by wicked hap that he sinned no more than youth may and be forgiven of God. In his first year of rule, as he stood, with his foemen slain and flushed with hope, there came greeting and homage from King Lot out of his islands oversea. Arthur greeted him as his good lord and bade him to his high feast, and King Lot came thither, bringing Queen Morgause of Orkney, his wife. She was in the green May-time of her years, and our king's years were scarce in April. He was the goodliest of all men, and knew not yet of what race he came. But King Lot was as cold as autumn rains and grown gray out of season. There sprang a swift love between Arthur and the queen, though no one knew, until too late, the bond of blood that connected them. They were of two fathers but one mother, and Mer-

lin set forth the thing, and broke the seal of Arthur's birth and showed his ruin. But come shine or shade his name shall be one with all knightliness, though his age shall bear the burdens of his youth. For, indeed, blind to him, his sister brought forth seed, and, of this child shall be born, destruction."

Iseult was much moved and marvelled greatly.

"Great pity it is," she said, "God could not do them as much right as we, who do not slay men for committing witless evil."

She sighed, and looked up from the waves to the clouds, seeing the day spring upright on the water. The sea shone with radiance, and a low, sweet gale shook the foam that fluttered around the prow. The moon withered to westward, and air and light and wave all seemed full of a burning rest.

Iseult's heart sprang within her, and she drew the sunrise and the keen, triumphant air through her lips with all her spirit. She felt the sovereign morning sink into her soul and the dawn cleave through the sweet veil of her body. All her May-day blood flushed as from a swoon. She turned and smiled with half summer in her eyes, and April still on her lips, for spirit and sense being at war within her shrank laughingly back, and would not let life put forth its full flower before the prince.

Then the soft speech grew between them again. They questioned of the mightiest warriors and of what names shone with most renown in love and fight. Tristram spoke of many noble things done at King Arthur's court, and told the tale of all his great knights and fair women.

Then said Iseult, "Let each knight have his meed of praise, and each good man witness of his worth; but when men laud the second name on earth, whom should they praise as the equal of him whose love glorifies queen Guenevere?"

"Nay," said Tristram, "there is no such man."

"What!" said she, "there is none such among all the earth's living? Yet I deemed men spoke of one—but maybe they dreamed, fools and babblers!—one that for all high things was worthiest, saving the one highest, to be loved and love."

"Little wit had they, then," said Tristram, "for there is no such man in the world."

"Ay, on land," quoth Iseult, "there is none such, nor where the fighting folk are; but were there really no such one between sea and sky, the world were poorer than I thought."

Tristram took her white hand and kissed it, laughing the while, and the blood lightened in shame through his fair face.

"Do they truly hear no such name?" she asked, with gentle persistence.

"If it be so, I wot the poor harper to the queen has not heard it," he said. Then he took up his harp and helped to speed the way with song.

"Nay," said Iseult, when he had done, "your song is hard to read."

"Ay, or too light to notice," said he, and sang again a warm and passionate love-ditty.

Iseult mused upon the words and said nothing. She was thinking of the sweet wonder of two made one in love, and love laid its hand on her so strong that she yearned for the day when she should see his face. But Tristram, with clear, strong eyes, and sweet-hearted as a bird, aroused her with glad words and songs, till she was as blithe and high of heart as he.

But as the Swallow swam onward through the sea, there came a light wind out of the east which strengthened as it blew. The sky blackened, and the waters began to thrill with storm. The green waves hardened into iron-blue, and their soft light went out.

Tristram took an oarsman's place and toiled mightily, seated full in the east wind. All the rowers pulled hard, but he more lustily than any three of them. Iseult watched him with eyes that knew no sin. She loved him only in girlish wise, taking a noble joy in his fair manliness. Nevertheless, she thought if God had

given her the grace to be a man, she would have liked to be as this one; for his stroke grew mightier as the waters broke higher.

They fought the storm for an hour, till the east wind fell, breath by breath, and the sun's face sprang forth again across the slackening rain. Then they all rested and took ease of heart, and Iseult rose up from where she sat, and cast from her the furs and subtle embroideries that wrapped her from the storm. Her hair and face were dashed with the salt spray, and she seemed to stand the first of all the world's flowers.

"I too took heart; I was not afraid," she said, laughing, to Tristram.

He made some courteous answer, and saw her face grow light as it looked on his for the last time with unenamoured eyes. He gave her look for look and knew not what it meant, and she also knew not. It was the last time,—the last that should ever be told of anywhere by those who should sing of them,—the last hour of rest for their unwounded hearts,—the last of peace, and they knew it not.

Tristram was tired with his toil and thirsted. "Iseult," he said, "for dear love's sake give me a drink, and for a pledge, the touch of four lips on the beaker-brim."

Iseult looked up and down and would not

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wake Brangwain, who slept as if she were half dead with fear. With hushed steps and great pity the lady went round her. She was a sweet-spirited maid, the daughter of a kindly king. As Iseult gazed on her she spied the secret charge kept close in the girl's bosom. She drew the golden cup forth smiling and marvelling at it. Then she bore it back to Tristram, and held out the love-draught that should be a fire to burn all shame and faith and fear out of them and make them forever sad.

Tristram bowed towards her, and craved to know whence this strange thing had come. It seemed the spoil of some Asian ruler stolen by starlight from a waste place in the sands, and yet here a maid bore it harmlessly in her hands.

Iseult laughed at his wonder.

"Other lords feast," she said, "and their men feast after them; but with us, the men keep back the best wine for their own feasting, and we feed after them. So it is with my handmaid and your squire. They have hid this thing from us for their own delight." Then, with hands that knew not they were digging a grave, she undid the hasps of gold and drank from the cup; and after she had taken her fill she gave it to Tristram, who also drank a deep, kingly draught.

And suddenly all their life was changed in them, for they had drunk of death.

His eyes filled with passion and dread. He was stung at heart with a new desire. Turning, he saw a strange terror in Iseult's eyes. She yearned towards him like a shining star fixed in the midnight.

Thus were they tempted. Their Galahault was the cup and she who mixed it. No other hand or sweet speech was needed to bring their lips together. Each hung on the other with unwonted looks, and their mouths trembled for a word. Their heads drew near together and their hands were joined. Though the sun shot fire into the south through the fine rain, they saw only darkness. Their lips met in a burning kiss.

II.

The second day of the sailing rose out of the night, and the ship's bow clove the shoreward waters. Tristram and Iseult stood hand in hand on the deck, with eyes dim from sweet remembrance of their new-made love, and scarce heeding the fair palace whither they were bound. It stood upon the summits of a rocky island, riven from the shore and encircled by the waves, and sprang high into the morning. Its eastern gate was full of sunrise, and on the vast stair that climbed sheer up from the sea to its portal, stood ranged the knights of King Mark.

When the bride had landed, these warriors

brought her up the steep way with loud cries of joy. She entered the strange halls where the tidal noises forever echoed. Tower shouldered tower above her with changing floors and stories, and flight upon flight climbing up to the apex, whence all the wide east and west were stretched in view.

Midway of the stairs, before the main tower's portal, stood King Mark. He was crowned, and his face looked as if he had long been hungering for the sun, and now thought to feel its blessing on his brow. He was a swart, lean man, but king-like, with a black-streaked beard and cold, unquiet eyes. Close-mouthed he was also, and gaunt-cheeked, though time had hardly strewn her first ashes on his worn hair. Little fire burnt within him, and he seemed weary of life's wayfaring.

He stood there between shade and sunlight, and his face did not change, nor did he yearn towards the bride. But when he saw her full glory, fear and shame smote him to take her hand and kiss her. His cold face flushed with a thin flame, and he led her silently to the bridal altar.

There they were wedded and hallowed by the priest; but through all the time of feasting there was a sole burning thought within three hearts where craft took counsel with desire.

When the feast had come to a glorious end the new queen was given over to her maids at the dawn of bride-night, who should lead her to the bridegroom. But Brangwain went to him and craftily prayed that, for love's sake, this thing might not be; but that the bride might come into the bride-bed without sound or light. He laughed as one who knew little of love's ways, and bade the handmaid do all as she wished. But he got little return for his gentleness, for Brangwain went, clothed like a bride, softly to King Mark, and Tristram came to the queen.

The night fled on, and before the day rose Brangwain slipped away from beside the sleeping king and Iseult went in and lay beside him. Waking up, he saw her fair red face and the strange golden hair loosed across the pillows which fired the hearts of men with love and their eyes with wonder.

The king marvelled at her glory.

"What have I done that God should bless me with all this great wealth?" he said in his heart. "Was it this I had beside me all night, this that seems fairer than heaven does in some tired saint's vision? Have I not sinned to have made her a mere man's wife?"

He mused and murmured thus, and Iseult listened to the faint words and laughed silently into her concealing hair.

Many a fair day and month slipped over them like music, and love's offerings burned during many a secret night. Many a dawn, too, blew a prelude to fiery noons, when the tune of the horn woke the woods with sounds of mirth. For Tristram was the mightiest huntsman of all the land, and he loved to ride by Iseult's rein, whose eyes and cheeks grew enkindled into richer beauty with the chase and the rapture of her steed. Yet often they took more joy of the woodland ways than came of the mad life of the hunt.

But once, when the knight had ridden away to do warfare against the Christless lands on the king's northern border, there came upon a secret quest to Mark's palace of Tintagle an unknown knight, named Palamede. He abode as a guest with the king in the likeness of a minstrel, and there was no man on earth, saving only Tristram, who could touch the strings so sweetly.

One loud and blustry evening, before set of sun, being full of wine and mirth, King Mark swore strongly to the strange minstrel that, for guerdon of his voice and song, he might crave of him what he desired. Then there came up the swart cheek of the player a flash of deeper color, and the sunken eyes laughed triumphantly.

"O King," he cried, "I crave no gift that

you may give a slave, but only your crowned queen and wife. Even unseen I loved her. I set my life on this one poor chance, for she is famed to be fairer than all saving Guenevere."

Then, like the noise of a seaward storm that beats the rocks with roaring laughter, the wrath and wonder of the knights rang through the hollow roof. But the king held his peace and glared hard upon the stranger.

"Man," he said, grimly, "though your craft be dark and your mind evil, yet the word of a king once plighted stands fast. Albeit it were less bitter for me to give up my life than my wife, yet it were worse in the sight of God and man to live shamed with broken troth."

The king bowed down and wept, and all his knights wept with him save one; but the queen did not weep, but looked statelier than ever before.

She rose, and her heart was great in her eyes. She was full of wrath and scorn to be sent thence from comfort and her natural right.

But they went forth into the darkness, and rode silently by wild ways a long journey. Iseult felt less fear than Palamede, for he was constrained by awe of her. He yearned towards her, and wondered if he might ever win her with love or skill. He well knew that forbearance would gain more grace from that sweet

mouth than violent kisses, for these would make his name abhorred to her.

The clouds were alternately thinned and thickened by the short gusts, and the noise of the sea moaned along the darkness. They halted anon, and the knight treated her as reverently as if she were his sleeping sister. He durst neither kiss her nor touch her hands or hair for very love and pity of her. Shame and grief stung him to the heart.

But the day sprang up now, and they heard the echo of hurrying hoofs far off along the waste. Like a rushing flame a single rider approached. He plunged upon them headlong out of the morning's darkness, and they saw that it was Tristram.

Palamede leaped up upon his war-horse ready to do battle, and they lashed together with a mighty shock of horse and man.

The fight began lustily as the sun rose. The strong steeds reeled to and fro with haggard eyes. Their stout heads were bent down, and their knees staggered under the strain of onset. The spears shocked again and again until they splintered. Then each knight drew his sword, and fell to royally with flashing blades. Once they drew off, and with tightened rein and deep spur-stroke bore in again at each other. But the jarring notes of the fight broke off

anon, and Palamede, stunned, fell like a ruined main-mast down from his saddle to the ground. The lovers left him where he had fallen and rode lightly away through the green lawns. Not far off there was a fair bower wrought out of boughs for love to rest in, and there Iseult and Tristram took their way. When they had come thither they refreshed their hearts with good cheer in hunter's fashion ; and it seemed to them sweeter to tarry there and give farewell to all the world's weariness than to reign as king and queen.

For three moons they dwelt there without thought of sorrow, fostered by the sweet earth as if they had been babes reared in the pathless forests. The sun sprang above the ocean and the stars rose and sank, and they lived the wise and free life of outlaws. Rumor of death and change seemed like a babbling tale. Tristram sang songs of mockery at their bitter godhead, and defied time to blot the glad life out of love.

Iseult drank deeply of the warm wine of his words, for he knew well all the subtlest ways of song.

Thus they fared, without a cloud to darken their delight. Yet in very wonder that such a life as theirs could be, they began to be haunted with dreams of desire and death. Tears would mingle with the passionate laughter in their

eyes, and they uttered wild speech in their yearning to pass beyond the boundary of time to love's final eminence.

III.

Three years had gone by since Tristram looked upon Iseult. He was weary of the long separation, and sad thoughts swept through his spirit as leaves through the autumnal air. His soul lay dead within him like a corpse in its grave. Yet the mood was rare upon him, for his heart was mighty and his fame ran through all the world.

It was the low sundown of the year. The toil and triumph of the past season were done. He could not choose but yearn for the first-born kiss of Iseult's mouth. But his heart was greater than his grief and kept his strength in its summer's prime. He looked out across the drifting sea and the shore crumbling under the waves, and communed with himself.

"What sum of pain would it take to break a man's soul?" he murmured. "We are all parts of one great end, and if we go through fire and water to a common bourn where we two must be made one, what does it matter?"

He mused upon his fate with closed lips and uplifted eyes, wandering about the bare wolds in banishment. His heart was hungry with long

absence from her he loved. Yet as he strode onward fresh courage came to him, and a dawn rose in his heart till it and the heart of the ancient hills were one. The winds took counsel with him and the sun spoke comfort. The shout of birds sounded in his ears like clear sweet speech. The noises of the streams were a welcome laughter, and spring's trumpet blew as a cry of love over moor and lea.

He went now as if a light were about his head, for neither grief nor fear can master a young man's blood so long that it shall lie dead to the voice of spring-time. All the births of the land and waifs of the water seemed to draw near to soothe his sorrow and set his life free from remembrance of pain. With an exalted heart he resolved to take his share of sun or storm and be glad for things lost, because they had brought him a hidden good.

He had come back now, after many seasons spent in barren ways, with strange fights and vigils under the shield, to the strait of sea which parts Cornwall from Brittany. Here dwelt the daughter of the king of those realms, who was named Iseult, because of her fair hands, and she looked on him and loved him. Being young, she was ashamed to speak her love, and kept it silent on her lips. On her heart, too, she set the seal of humility. But when the stranger

came into her sight, a weary and banished man, all unlike him who steered the Swallow, and sang the imperial Iseult to her home, this maiden of sixteen sinless years looked upon him courteously, and he burned her eyes as though she had turned them on the sun itself. She felt a sweet thrill beat through her veins even to her hands and feet. When he spoke, there sounded a song in her ears as if it came out of past days, heard once and forgotten, and now remembered again with rapture. But her soul took the sense of change as the mountain snow takes the first sense of April's approach. To her, maiden love was an unknown thing. Her eyes hardly followed him; her cheeks scarcely took on another hue at his speech, and her mouth no more trembled than a rose will at a light breeze. If she sighed in her sleep, she knew it not.

Yet in her heart there hovered thoughts of past things, till her memory burned with grief and hope to see him so great and so sad. She knew not what fate had bowed his head. He scarcely spoke to her at all of the things which had sent him over sea from his own land into banishment. And yet remembrance of his least word of courtesy, his tender thanks for her pity, his fair greetings, seemed to cling around her always.

But when her name would fall on him between strange words, his heart suddenly bounded back to its lure like a falcon, and trembled and bowed down before it. "Iseult" he would hear, and the cloud-like world grew aflame to him and his heart flashed lightning. "Iseult" again, and the weary heavens shone like the queen's own kindling eyes. Thus, seeing the blood mount in his face at hearing her name, the girl thought, "Haply, my name was worn by one long ago dead,—some sister he loved." So pitying him, her heart was brought ever into deeper thraldom.

But once, when the winds made mirth outside and March was holding revel, a new delight mingled with doubt entered the maiden's soul, and she yearned towards him as he touched the harp on high before her. His words kindled her heart, and through all the rhymes came the soft burden of her name. Before the song had ended joy strove with fear in her and cast fear out, and, like Tristram's harp, she tingled with a music born of hope.

He ceased to sing at last, yearning upon the name; and she quailed and trembled before she dared raise her eyes to his for an answer to her love.

Her face began to flush with changing roses, and she would fain have said something, but did

not know what it should be. Then she rose up and reached forth her hand to him, and he bowed his head and dropped his knee, and his lips pressed like fire upon her fragrant hand. Their hearts were like a trembling harp, where music seemed to shudder at its own joy.

Thus their marriage night dawned in the moon-rise of love.

IV.

The spring waned into May-time and the days sped on towards the bridal morning. The ring was set on Iseult's fair hand, while the song that hailed her name as love's queen still hovered in her ears. In her young loveliness she was innocent of all desire and doubt, and her heart quivered with a pulse of light.

Her father and her brother led her between them from the hall to the shrine, and from the shrine to the marriage-bed. Yet she did not discover how at home-coming there happened to fall from Tristram's hand a royal ring, which, looking upon, he felt the old passion kindle anew in his faithless heart.

The ring was given to him by the hand where his heart's pledge lay forever, and the sin that should be done if he should take this maid to wife, abashed his spirit and made him grow cold for very shame.

As he thought of the thing, all the past rose upon him. He saw once again, in vision, how they had parted, and how they had been found in the greenwood asleep, yet severed from each other by the sword which lay between them. How Mark, the king, when he saw this, held it for a sign that they were no fleshly lovers, for he deemed it sacred. How, when they awakened, they saw the king with his folk about him, and rose and went home with him to the towers washed by the sea, and the halls where the music of the waves forever resounded. How rumor of their love began to swell, and the most trusted of his peers, a born kinsman, who hated him, whispered at midnight to King Mark where he might find them together. How, before the morning, they brought him down, fast bound, to the old chapel on the sea-rocks, with forty knights about him, the chief of whom was the traitor who had betrayed him. How, seeing he must needs die, he asked if they had forgotten what deeds he had done for Cornwall, he who had rescued them, had fought against the foul Irish invader who came to take three hundred children as tribute. How none dared look up at him, saving only the traitor knight, who defied him and would have slain him. How, when he saw the sword pulled forth, he looked on his bound hands and wrenched away

their bonds, haling the two who guarded him suddenly to him, and, kindling with anger, leapt on his kinsman and wrung the sword from his hands and smote him down. How all the press came raging on him and he slew ten knights without a wound. How the throng waxed greater, but he had won the chapel overlooking the sea. How his heart sprang, seeing the leaps he must take to swim out across the belt of billows to the mainland. How, as a sea-gull, hovering aloft, suddenly drops, he hung for a brief breathing space, then plunged with an exulting heart. How at last he triumphed, and how Gouvernayle, his squire, watching hard by, sought where a man swimming might win the shore, and went there and stayed till he swam in all bruised by the buffets of the waves, but laughing and flushed as if with wine.

Tristram felt all this come upon him in a breath, and he marvelled that it should be no more bitter to die than it seemed there in the sea. He pondered how all his years had brought but him to this sweet yet dark time, where his foot faltered on the threshold of the bridal bower, for it seemed harder to pass through than through all the perils of the past. Faith alone gave him courage in this extremity, for his heart quailed when the stars rose and the torches were put out. The bride-

house seemed hung with mourning to him. But he passed into the sweet light of the maiden bower where Iseult lay like a fair blossom that he might not gather. Fierce regret and loyalty strove in him with pity towards his tender young wife, that must never wear the crown of wedlock, never bear children to worship her white hair, and never know the laughter that flows from the lips of little ones.

He stood pale and rent with passion in presence of the gay bride-folk before he went into the chamber. There the white hands gleamed and the fair hair glowed that reminded him bitterly of one who was fairer. But the young bride shone so fair in the flower of her youth, that his heart could scarcely keep its pledge as he gazed on her. He drew near to where she lay in bed, in the midst of the dim twilight of her alcove. He sighed as he approached her, and then lay down at her side, but said no word. But his heart spoke within him. He felt how sore a thing it would be to break troth with her, most faithful as she was of womankind. His quick blood sprang and sank, and he spoke aloud for memory's sake the one word:

"Iseult."

"I am here," said a virgin voice, full of timid love. A pang rent him; but still faith held her

mastery. His spirit and flesh were vassals to his will.

Softly, with the motion of a bough where a bird alights, he turned and kissed her once on the forehead.

But he kept his faith unbroken, for in between them floated a face more fair than hers.

V.

But that same night across the sea in Cornwall, Tristram's hound Hodain couched against Queen Iseult's knee with keen eyes that read her heart's pain. He was the mightiest of his race on earth, and had plied his craft for many a day through the forest before Tristram and Iseult. The queen cherished him more because of Tristram's absence than for the old times when Tristram's horn-blast would quicken him into delight of the dawn. Now he chafed through all the long, barren days, soothed only by the queen's hand.

In the halls below, far under these, sat King Mark, feasting. He was full of cheer, as on the night when the harper had claimed his gift and had ridden away with his wife. Music revelled on the breeze, and songs floated up the stair mingled with the roar of wassail. The king took good heart from his wine-cups and the harp-playing, and his cold veins rejoiced as with the life-blood

of a kinglier man. The queen, in her far-away bower, shut her weary ears and sad eyes. She wrung her hair with fierce hands, and prayed to God for Tristram's love to comfort her in her down-fallen life. The night spoke, and the sea thundered on for wreckage, and the northern bastions rang out deep responses as the east wind girded up his strength and hurled the fleeces of the storm in against them. But she heard neither wind nor sea, and knew not whether the night was calm or maddened with wind. In words that were half a prayer and half a cry she murmured on across the waters to her love:

"Dear, do you see my worn face? do you heed my wild speech where you sleep to-night? Ah, love, are your days my days, and are all your nights like my nights? Does the sun grieve you? Are you soul-sick till the day dies and weary till it rises? Is your heart full of dead things, as mine is? No, no; you are a man, with a man's strength,—no bond-woman, no queen, no loveless wife."

The iron wind sounded like a sword, and the sea seemed an outbreaking battle. She prayed that Tristram's love should be turned from her, lest he also should lose God, as she had done. Then, in the extremity of her grief, she wailed: "O God, give him back! give him back!

for how shall we live asunder who are as one heart!"

All the night long she strove in prayer, and when at last there came a ripple of dawn in the East, she could see the hound crouched at her feet and her bitterness flowed out in tears. He laid his kind head along her knee, and she put her arms about his neck. The darkness passed away from her like a breaking chain; but her heart still wailed within her, and she was loath to see the sun with her weary eyes.

At that same moment of dawn, in a land far away, the glad eyes of Iseult of Brittany awoke beside her new lord, Tristram, in her marriage-bower.

VI.

Before April had come and gone, a feud arose in Brittany between Ganhardine, Iseult's brother, and Tristram, her husband. One day, as they rode forth hawking, Ganhardine came to Tristram in great wrath.

"We have loved you, and you have shown us only scorn in return," he said, hotly. "Why is your bride not yours indeed? why is she a stranger beside you? What evil has she done to be mocked with mouth-marriage and set at naught?"

Anger and wonder came upon Tristram's face.

"Has she bidden you plead with me for her sake?" he asked, scornfully. "I believed more nobly of her than that such a part should find so fair a player."

"Nay," said Ganhardine; "only just now, riding beneath these white thorns, a flower fell into her girdle-stead, which, with a laugh, she shook out. 'What liberty the wind gives this stray!' she said. 'See, it lies nearer my heart than anything since my mother lulled me,—even my lord himself.' Thus I know that you scorn us all,—a race held as not worth communion with yours,—unless there is some fault in her to blemish our alliance."

"Neither blame nor scorn may touch my bride," said Tristram, "albeit she lives unknown of love. Faith only withheld me, and forbade the grace of wedlock; not that I loved her any the less, but that my love of faith was more. And you, Ganhardine, though your heart is keen against me now, could you but see my very lady herself, then you, no more than all other men, would hold my faith to her as a fault."

Before the day's hawking came to an end, Tristram had sworn to his brother Ganhardine that he should see that other strange Iseult.

They soon set out for Cornwall, and, after much travel by sea and land, reached the royal domain where the hunt rang as of old when

Tristram's horn led, with the queen's horse at his side.

That day the first of all the queen's dames who rode before the company with a ringing rein and gay laughter was Brangwain, ever her lady's true handmaid.

When Ganhardine beheld her, he marvelled at her beauty.

"Be called for all time a truth-teller!" he exclaimed to Tristram. "Never yet have I seen a sight like this!"

"Ay," said Tristram; "and she whom you look upon is so great in grace that you have less cause than ever for wrath against me, seeing she is but my lady's handmaid. And do you see no other light, Ganhardine? a golden light there, which shines wherever one moves in midst of them all, above all, past all praise? That is she."

Ganhardine stood as one dizzy with wine. He gazed out hard at the troop, and his heart was cloven as with a sword. He scarcely spoke, for he was consumed with love for the queen's fair handmaid.

Then, because he was unknown to the king's followers, Tristram bade him carry his ring to Brangwain, that she might give it secretly to the queen and send him word where they might meet.

That same night they came together under the stars as of old. Iseult feigned sickness to the king and kept him from her, while she met Tristram in the midst of her pavilion; but Ganhardine wooed Brangwain.

Iseult and Tristram plotted there in the night how they should flee, and where they should go.

"For the way was shown me by Queen Guenevere of late," said Iseult, "to give me comfort of my wrong from the traitor Tristram when it was thought he had forsaken me. Her sweet soul should not yet be changed towards me if I crave a boon. What, then, if we take horse, and make haste to Camelot?"

The next night they set out, and in a brief space came to Camelot, where their long-enduring love got them much grace of Launcelot and Guenevere, whom men praised as the lordliest lovers in the world.

The weeks and months sped by since they had first seen the strength of Joyous Gard. Love gave them a quiet life in that deep and glorious tower which stands between the wild seas and lands. They took many a day's delight with hawk and hound in those wide lands, and the long waves often buoyed their boat between the rocks. Sated then with such joys, they would sit and commune of past things,—what

state King Arthur once held in the halls they dwelt in; of Tristram himself and his three days' triumph in the tourney when Iseult sat enthroned by Guenevere,—till at last Iseult fell to bemoaning her lack of beauty because she was outshone by the other queen, and Tristram laughed gently at her, saying she forged sweet wiles like children to deceive herself.

"Shall I trust you more than a fairy creature, who so belie yourself?" he asked, with a caress.

She rebuked him for breaking troth with her in marrying the other Iseult; but he spoke of the draught they had drained of old, mixed by the hands of love and fate, since which no power could ever part them, for the will of either love or fate, however it might seem at strife, was one towards them who had drunk, as death and life are a sole doom towards all; for no man may behold the sun and not behold the darkness also.

"O my heart," he broke forth, "heavenliest head that ever won the worship of men! do not think it much to die. You are not made in the mould of those who pass away forever!"

"But what shall praise profit me when I am dead?" she asked. "What am I, that my name should live so long? What gift can I give you? Only peril and sleepless watches, exile, rebuke,

remorse, and—oh, not shame, that only I did not give you."

Before he stooped to kiss her, Tristram smiled.

"Why desire more words?" he said. "You have given me life, not death. All I had before I won you was but as the shadow of death. How should I, who have belonged to sorrow from my cradle, kiss the red lips of mirth? There is no third on the earth to stand with Guenevere beside my queen,—not Nimue, nor Ettarde, nor she whose blind love brought forth a flame to burn its sire, King Arthur; but lately we saw her pass, whose own sons have doomed her to death for her shame."

"Death—yes," quoth Iseult; "there is not said a surer word on earth. Death and again death, and for every utterance ten tongues chime an answer. God send us a good end,—so men pray. But I pray God send me this end,—not to die divided from you, or with a heart rent by the sword, but only when you die, and only where you are!"

Thus they communed till the evening was worn away. They did not hold life or love any the less dear because of death. They stood on the soft, funereal shore watching till the day should wholly ebb. They saw the far-away sea sweep out to the remote gray sky, and the long sands slope down to the sea. Night made one

sweet mist of the moors where only the distant foam sent forth a gleam, and life sank in them as silently as the darkness sank upon the land and sea.

VII.

But all that year in Brittany dwelt the white-handed Iseult brooding over her sorrows. The sweet spirit of old was parched with blasts of angry thought. Her fair innocence was consumed with the strong flame of jealousy.

The same hour of twilight which brought the lovers together far away in Joyous Gard saw her seated at watch by the opening sea. The day seemed to cling with a trembling hand, reluctant to recede, and in her soul likewise lingered envy and hatred. She saw far off in spirit the likeness of her lord wrought in light upon the darkness; but there was an imperial figure beside him whose shadow cast down his bride. Iseult's eyes and heart looked upon the sunset as upon the fires of hell; but the wrath within her seemed a passionate holiness.

"How long, how long," she moaned, "till thou do justice, O long-suffering judge! Shalt thou not one day put him in mine hand whom I loved so, to slay and spare not? Shalt thou not cast her down that I may step upon her humbled head? Do I not well to be angry? Yea, thou knowest I do well. Is not thy seal of blood-red

radiance set there for witness on the brows of day and night? Make me thy sword, O Lord, against all of these that wrong me!"

She mused and prayed in fierce outbursts till the fire in the sea and sky sank away and the northwest wind began to blow harshly above her. Her heart waxed dark and bitter as she listened to the sea, and the wind's voice seemed spoken by her own soul. The breath about her was not of darkness, but of very death.

Yet, in spite of the young bride's grief, the days at Joyous Gard sped on in happiness, like a cloud gleaming in the western sun. The lovers knew not any more than the waters what wind might blow next, but spent their time in gladness of heart. But before the summer had passed all their joy was shaken to dust. For the last time they strayed upon the strand together, and then they took leave, and saw the skies grow dark because they were divided.

A summons came to Tristram in the king's name. He was commanded to go to the succor of the king's vassal, Triamour, who ruled in Wales, but was now spoiled of his power, as was Tristram's father of old, by one of the strongest sons of earth, named Urgan, a giant of iron bulk.

Iseult's lord, King Mark, had demanded her to be restored by Arthur; and she too parted from Joyous Gard, and sat once again, crowned

with state and sorrow, in Tintagel. She yielded, but against her will, saying within her own soul that some season must give her life again, or death. Her days were void of light or darknesss now that King Mark kept his haggard watch upon her, for his looks were more cloudy than the winter skies. Her heart waxed bitter towards him; but he was rent in twain by harsh love and hate of her, yearning to be quit of shame. His life grew a smouldering fire, and hers was charged full with storm, touched now and again with trembling gleams as hope strove with the darkness.

But Tristram rode, the while, through the wastes of glorious Wales, high-hearted with the desire for fight. He was stronger in soul, and had a merrier sense of strength, than since the first years of his knighthood. All his will was towards war. Love had too long repressed him and kept him from glory. His hope waxed blithe towards battle, and high desire to pluck fame once more out of the circling fire.

All the lovely land where he rode had been blasted by war, and the homesteads and fields were black with fire. The dead lay festering in the soft air, and the streams were loud with the wail of women. Pity for these things brought a deeper wrath, and quickened Tristram's will every league he rode through the aching land.

One day, at dawn, he saw, high on a steep windy bridge that spanned the mouth of a glen, the shadow he had come to seek. It had a sword at thigh and a mace in its hand as vast as a roof-tree's beam. Thus, dire of face, rose Urgan sheer above the wolf-haunted torrent. His eyes were night and flame, but Tristram's were like the ruddy dawn, lit with sublime desire.

Strong in the vantage of his position, the huge red presence reared up his mace like a reed and smote at Tristram with it. But the knight lightly swerved aside and drove right in on him, while the giant's void stroke only clove the air, and fell wide with a great thunder. He sent forth a cry stormier than the wind and sea in tempest, and the glen roared in echo. But Tristram's blade shone high, and flashed as it shore off the huge right hand whose strength was like the shadow of death upon that region. Urgan reeled like the trunk of some grim tree sawn through and tottering, as he grasped with his left hand a sword tempered by sorcerers. He raged forth anew, then, till all the cliffs were thrilled by his cry of onset. With the might of a storm-wind his sword crashed on Tristram's helm, and the knight fell; his arms clashed together, and a wide shout for his sake broke from those who stood far off and heard the noise. The giant sent forth a cry which was

more awful because of its joy; but before the sun-bright arms were soiled by the earth, they flashed again, and Tristram was on his feet. Swift and clear rang the strokes, and so dense was the dust, that they fought as if they were enveloped in a circling cloud. Each saw his foe's blood break out between the jointed corselet as the steel dented the hammered iron. Then the fiend put forth his might, grown all the stronger for his pain, and cleft the knight's shield in two. He laughed for very thirst to kill, like a wolfish beast, and smote again before Tristram, panting and swept by the sense of death, could breathe; but the stroke shrilled to one side and passed harmless. Then Tristram gave an answering thrust that pierced the brute clean through as with lightning. The vast bulk leaped violently upright and plunged over the bridge, and all the cliffs rang with the noise of his monstrous fall. Thus the land, by grace of Tristram, was made free.

Then Tristram parted from thence with high honor, and set his sail again to the southward. He passed the land's end, beheld first and last by those who look upon England from the sea, and his heart mourned within him, knowing how she who was his by fate sat fast bound in Tintagel, as though some charm were about her. The south and north were changed for him.

The northward coast shone fair and smooth, and the keen-edged wind blew summer from its iron cliffs, kindled at her mute lips. But the winter breathed out of the south, where, pale with watching, sat the lone wife. Yet his soul took joy of the sun and sea as he swept by the lion-guarded strand, past the unsounded caves, and onward to the bay whence love herself might have arisen.

Past this, also, Tristram held his course, back to the wild shore whence he should never come again to look upon these things, nor ever sail home to sleep at last in his native earth. And so he came back to the gray old land where Merlin was at rest.

But before he had trodden six paces forth on shore, a knight with unshed feet stood before him, who knelt and called upon him, as sick men call upon God for pity, with hands held up and bare head bowed.

"Tristram, for God's love and your own honor, I, Tristram, who am one with you in name, and one in heart with all who praise you, I, most woful of all men who may not die, beseech you, be not slow to avenge my sorrows. I charge you for your fame's sake, and I pray you by your own wife's fair hand, have pity of me whose love is borne away by one that preys upon poor men's lives,—a felon masked in

knighthood! He has seven brethren at his side night and day, with seven more knights that wait on his will. Here at hand they will fare before another day passes, bringing my bride among them, whom they carry a prisoner through these wild lands. If I lose her now, and my prayer be in vain, if you be less eager to serve love's votaries than of old, then surely I shall see her face no more! But if you will, for the sake of your own bride, strike with me, then it behooves us to travel straight from here and to lie in wait between the moor and the sea, where we may smite them as they pass."

Tristram's lordly face was softened by his appeal.

"Nay, then," said he, "may God send me as evil a thing when I fail to give ear to such prayers, and to avenge the unrighteous griefs of good men. I will neither enter in nor abide here in my own halls till this piteous quest has an end to-morrow. But do you, Ganhardine, whose sister's face I must delay to look on, go with tidings of my vow, and greet my wife in my place. Crave her pardon that, for the sake of knighthood and womanhood, I do not seek her till two nights are past and my quest accomplished; so may it please God through me to give ease to this young man's anguish."

Then Tristram, with the woful knight at his

side, rode away through the moorland wastes at twilight, and Ganhardine sped towards his sister, and found her at last, seated alone gazing over the gray sea. He lightly kissed her hand and told her the tidings of Tristram's quest. She bowed her head, and glanced sidewise at him. Gravely she spoke:

"As God is on earth and above the stars, so may my lord's will be done towards his handmaid."

Vague doubts touched Ganhardine's spirit, and for an instant he thought of death, yet he knew not whence the thought came. Surely not from his sister, for she was always sweet and good. But the flitting shadow went by anon, and his mind was as light again as the leaping waves. He did not dream how dark hers was.

The knightly name-fellows lay by the sea-banks where at morning their foes might overtake them. One was sick at heart and sleepless, but the other triumphantly dreamed of love and fame. Sleep at last wrapped the wan young knight in its folds; but at dawn Tristram awoke and heard the call of the breakers. His soul yearned in him for very delight, and his blood beat time to the wind and water. He followed their alluring music, and stood on the verge of the sand before the gray flood, where the white heads of the waves rose up still untouched by

the dawn. A strong joy that thrilled him even to his hands and feet shot out from his heart, and he drank the immeasurable delight that the earth drinks in the morning. He watched the dim sea awhile, and felt its sound and savor sink through his being. He cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight with the waves, and stood naked on the strand. Then he sprang as towards a mother's breast with a cry of love, and his heart sent forth a shout that triumphed silently within him. He bent laughing towards the foam and launched his body like a boat. He struck out with wide amorous arms to take the bright breast of the waves to his own. Delight grew within him, till each glad limb became a note of rapture in life's harmony. Then all the rippling green turned golden between him and the rising sun. His joy grew mightier as he met each wave, till the light began to beat hard on his eyes and bade him turn his face shoreward. He swam back with a reluctant heart and donned his arms again, feeling all his limbs rejoice in their new strength. Then he turned, filled with a strenuous joy and content, to take his last delight for labor well done.

Beside the edge of a wood in that broken land the two stood together, till there came a flash of approaching spears between the trees

and the moorside. The young knight saw his bride riding as a prisoner by the strong chief's rein, and he leapt forth with a cry, flying upon the felon like a sudden flame. The mightier Tristram, bright and terrible, came on hard at hand, and sword and spear had their full desire, for the blood that quenched the thirst of the spear slaked the hunger of the sword till the fierce heart of steel could scarce fulfil its greed of ravin. Tristram's spear drove down three before they touched a point of his harness. His heart bounded within him. He rejoiced and ranged among them till seven lay upon the heather or in the dense breadth of fern by the woodside; but his heart burned even more mightily within him to see that young knight fallen by his side while the red sword was reared to slay him. He came like a flame upon the slayer. His face was as a lion's; but his sword flashed and wrought his will, cleaving the wrong-doer's head though casque and crown. The felons hurtled to and fro about their fallen chief, till Tristram's right hand scattered them. But one who retreated, with a sidelong glance shot at Tristram from his bow. The shaft smote full in the print of the ancient wound received in his first great fight, when he freed Cornwall and slew its oppressor.

The knight was sorely hurt, and hardly won

home with long and painful toil. He fared through his gate with halting steps and fell down thirsting on the threshold. The fires of his first wound burned in him again, and his face was dark with agony. But those within who were watching, all unheedful of the fray, came forth and made a piteous outcry about him. His thanks were spoken faintly and slowly while they reared him up and bore him down the length of the deep hall which looked out upon the shore. They laid him softly in bed, and the leeches came and sought to heal him with their herbs, but it was vain, so great was his hurt.

All this Iseult heard where she listened, and she drew near to him, but did not speak. She gazed doubtfully upon him with clouded eyes. He spoke to her in knightly manner and most kindly, but, though he smiled, his breath was scant.

"Surely," said he, "this is penance, to lie here and lack the strength to do no more than moan, hopeless of pardon."

She bowed her head and was silent as a stooping cloud as she laid her lips against his face. He felt a shadow sink across him as the sea might feel a cloud stoop towards it. His heart darkened as when one is wasted by a sorcerer's art, not knowing whence comes the blight. He turned his look away from her

emerald eyes and yearned all night for the golden eyes of his love. The night hung sleeplessly around him till the first lark rang out its record of the departed darkness and all things took comfort again of the sun.

VIII.

For three dim days and sleepless nights the strong man's soul, sealed with pain and all its springs half dried up with thirst, lay wasting in weariness. Fain would it have found a star upon which its eyes might look forth for hope or any light betokening life. But this could not be, and in the last hour of the third night, Tristram, seeing the daybreak at hand, spoke to his brother Ganhardine who watched beside him.

"My brother, always true to me," he said, "I charge you, by those days and nights we knew no great while since in England, to do for me now the last good deed that love may crave or life desire ere it be laid in ashes by love: take my ship that shows there aloft against the sea, with the semblance of a swan carved on her stem, and, before the waves wax wan again at evening, pass to my lady's land and give this ring to her secretly. Bid her think how hard upon death I am, and tell her that I fain would look upon her face once again and die. But the bark must be laden as a merchant's, with freight-

age of royal ware, that King Mark may take some costly thing from it as toll. Then, when this gift finds grace before him, choose a cup and put my ring in it, so that it may be seen only of one, and bid the queen's handmaid bear it to her in earnest of your homage. She will grow fearful then, and take counsel with you privily, to know what errand from me you came upon, and what my need is. Make two sails for the ship,—one of white, like the sea-foam, to spread for a signal if you bring her back with you, and one of black, to show that she does not come. From these I may know, before you take the shore, whether my lips are to die upon her hand, or if hers are never more to be mixed with mine."

Tristram's heart quailed to see Ganhardine's grief, but the young knight swore to do all that his brother bade him, and straightway to sail forth as he commanded.

But Iseult, listening, overheard what they had said, and her heart waxed hot. Every syllable seemed graven and printed upon her thought. In her heavy heart she cursed both of them, and her whole soul hungered for their death. A virgin lust for vengeance burned within the childless wife, and hatred impelled her to do the work of fate.

The Swan set sail with a southwest wind,

and bore to the north over the wintering sea. She beat round the wild western point and took her way up the channel east on towards Tintagel. There, landing at dusk, they found a fair welcome from King Mark, and Ganhardine spoke with Brangwain, as of old. She took the golden cup with Tristram's troth-plight ring hidden in it, and bore it unseen by her master to her lady's hand. Iseult looked upon the gift, though it was very fair and costly, with a weary graciousness; but, seeing what was within it, her life suddenly leapt up in her and she was keen to guess the meaning of the symbol. Her face flushed bright with blood, whence all her grief took fire and was kindled with joy even to her quivering hair.

In the midnight hour Iseult, muffled up to her wan lips, stole down and came where the Swan still swung fast at anchor. She stepped upon the deck, and then the bright sails were hoisted in the starlight, and the boat sped out upon the glimmering sea.

But all that long night Tristram's wound waxed in pain, and his heart hung heavier each hour between hope and fear. With her face and her heart at warfare, his maiden wife watched beside him very patiently, and spoke only when he murmured some speech, which was all the more bitter to hear because

the words were sweet. As she listened, hatred thrilled her through, for the passionate burden of her name always came back to her. But he never uttered any thought of her. The wandering soul clung only to dreams of happiness at Joyous Gard, of nights in the wildwood by the Cornish coast, or of Merlin's holier slumber hard by, wrapped round with soft spells in Broceliande. The wounded knight desired the dewy sense of leaves and the smell of thickets drenched with the dawn, the splendor and tumult that sting the hunter and his hound Hodain, the pulse and passion of the sea and the rapture of the forest. Often he would sigh like one who wished to be dead, or close his eyes for comfort which he could never find.

The wind slackened and grew loud by turns, putting forth a wail that filled the night, north and south, with the woful sound of waters.

"So might the wind wail if the world were dead and its wings wandered over nothing but the sea," sighed Tristram. "I would I knew she could not come, for surely she will not. Once knowing it, I should gladly die. I dreamed not that life could breathe so long as I do. Oh, what grief it were, if death, the sure friend, who lies not, if he were dead, and all the ways closed whence despair might pass away with life!"

"Fear not but that death shall come, and after death judgment," spoke his virgin wife out of her heart, but deep down below her breath.

He did not hear, but murmured on:

"Ah, but there was one whom my eyes knew living while the sun yet looked upon him, and the deep, sweet sound of whose godlike words mine ears once heard, who sleeps and does not die, but takes away all the deep delight of death through love's gift of a woman. Love's hand is not for me the hand of Nimue, nor is her speech the smooth murmur of the dove. Dear, thy love shall never bid me sleep or live, nor shall my soul take rest from your brows and lips as his from Nimue's. Our long love has given only unrest on earth that will win us no rest in heaven. What rest may we ever take? What peace have we had more than the sea? Oh, to me one fleet, forbidden sense of you, one perfume of your present grace, one thought, made truth for one hour, were more than all the green leaves in Broceliande, full of sweet sound and wind and sun."

Softly as hate when it speaks apart to itself, answered the wedded maiden,—

"Surely, you who rent my heart, being one in sin, shall not be divided in punishment?"

The great knight did not heed her words.

He sighed, but sweet thoughts kindled the sigh with joy:

"Ay, how much,—much more than sun, or air, or spring-tide; how much more than strong sea-wind quickening the waves and sand with one divine impulse; how much more than all these were it if she might give me the kiss of death!"

The white virgin bride answered, inwardly, wan with a hurt no herb might make whole,—

"Surely, ye whose sin has slain my very soul, shall have my blessing and peace in death!"

"Oh, Iseult, mine own, mine, and no man's yet, save mine only!" broke forth Tristram, "what ails you that I lack you so long? Come, let us pass hence and try if death be not better than life!"

His maiden bride, pale as the moon when the sky is starless, rose up with eyes strangely set and gazed on him; but he did not see her. Her bosom heaved warm and full of life. She looked towards him, and her heart burned bitter like an after-taste of sin. No fear touched him, either of her eyes above him, or of her ears which hoarded each poor word of his love.

"Iseult," he cried again, "how can it be that you cannot hear, being only divided by space? One of the twain I looked for is here. Shall death keep tryst, and not you?"

Iseult, his wife, laughed at heart. She spoke with lips close-pressed, and as if there was fire between them:

"Yea, now you do not lie; for I am death!"

The dawn came coldly up, and a strong wind blew from the east between the clouds and the waters. Tristram saw her face doubtfully through the dusk.

"Iseult!" he said.

Her virgin voice rang faintly, like a death-bell:

"I am here."

The knight's heart sprang up and sank again. Then she asked,—

"What would my lord have of me?"

"Have you watched all night beside me, and I knew it not? God requite you for comfort shown a man near to death."

"God, who has kept me through all my days to this hour, shall surely guerdon it," was her answer.

"God alone has power to pay for such grace to one who is unworthy of pardon. Were my heart good, I would crave a charity; but it fails me now, like a coward's!"

Her face was as a pale flame that burns down low by midnight.

"Speak," she said; "and, though your bidding should bring me death, God's love shall renounce me if it be not done."

Tristram's face brightened, and he feebly spoke his request:

"When the sun touches the sea-line, look off and see if my ship does not come up with the morning star, bound hither from the north. Tell me, then, if her sail be white or black."

She knew full well the sense of his desire, and she could not wring a word from her lips, but bowed humbly in answer. The sign made him light at heart. Then she set her face hard against the sea, which was now all athirst with the trembling hope of dawn; but her heart yearned with a deeper thirst for the vengeance that would fulfil her hatred.

Tristram lay in a thankful rest, thinking that neither life nor death could now grieve him, since the anguish of living was past, and the bitterness of dying. He had found unlooked-for grace at her hands, and it could not be but that some breathing-time would be given him to look once again on his love.

"The night bears the morning," he said in his heart, "and men fable that the swan sings sweetest before death. So my golden Swan seems to sing a song to me from the sea. Shall all else brighten, and this, my one sign, be dark?"

Then suddenly, from a great height in the sky, the lark sang triumphant, and the first refluent beam filled the hollow darkness with day. A

fluctuant light gleamed on the hollow darkness. It grew and strengthened, and at last the clear white of a sail bowed and dipped and rose far out at sea. Swift as the wing of a sea-mew it came near before the wind, as if fain to bring comfort and shorten its narrowing track. The watcher saw, and looked towards her wounded lord.

"Ay," she said, "the ship surely comes, but her sail is black."

He would have sprung upright and looked for himself, but strong death struck him, and darkness closed around him like iron, and Tristram lay dead, smitten through the heart.

The news had scarcely gone abroad and the wail of woe risen, before the snow-bright sail came to shoreward, and Ganhardine leaped forth to land leading Iseult from the ship swiftly and reverently.

From the crowd around them broke forth the great wail for Tristram, and before even her ear had heard, her heart divined the truth. She sought no witness of the tidings, but came and stood above him. Her head bowed as if to reach the spring that slakes all thirst, and their four lips met in a long, silent kiss.

So their hour came, and the stroke of love's hand gave them deliverance from love and strife into perpetual rest.

King Mark wept loud like a child upon them, for he found a scripture, writ by Tristram's hand around the sword-hilt which had fought of old for Cornwall, that told him all their story. They prayed his pardon, for they had no choice of will, but were bound by the sorcerer's spell. His heart was molten in him, and he kissed each with a kiss of kinship.

"Had I known," he wailed, "ye had never sinned nor died thus, nor would I have borne so sad a part in this doom that bade you sin and die."

He built a chapel for their tomb, bright like the spring, with a wealth of branching tracery, and there they slept, wedded, under the sun and moon and the changes of the stars. Through the casements came the midnight and the noon-day to illumine or to veil their grave. But at last there came darkness on these things also. The strong sea swallowed the walls and tower, and many a fathom of tide gleams and moans over the place where they were laid in that ancient time. No man shall look down where they sleep forever, and none shall say here once slept Tristram and Iseult. Theirs is a peace that none who live may ever gain; for while life and death last, the light and sound and darkness of the sea are eternally over them.

FORD FALCON 4-DOOR WAGON

LORD LYTTON (OWEN MEREDITH).

LUCILE.

LORD LYTTON (OWEN MEREDITH).

LUCILE.

I.

Lord Alfred Vargrave was startled. With an unsteady hand he had just torn open a letter from the Comtesse de Nevers and had walked nervously to the window. The month was September, and he was still lingering in the heart of the Pyrenees at Bigorre. It was a chilly morning he looked out upon. The woods were brown and cold on the hill-side, and the only thing abroad in the streets was the wind. Indeed, the prospect was far from pleasing, and Lord Alfred was in a disquieted mood.

"Confound it!" he muttered, as he looked over the letter; but he gave no hint of the thoughts which led to this exclamation, and turned again to gaze blankly out of the window.

Suddenly his musing was disturbed by somebody who burst open the door crying, "A fool, Alfred, a fool, a most motley fool!"

It was my lord's cousin John.

"Who?" asked Lord Vargrave.

"The man who can find anything better to do and yet degrades himself as Man by travelling with a woman in love—unless she's in love with him."

"Indeed! Why are you here, then, my dear Jack?" inquired Lord Alfred.

"Can't you guess?"

"Not I."

"Why, because I *have* nothing better to do. I'd rather be bored by you, my dear Alfred, I confess it, than be bored by myself. That perverse golden-haired elf that has led you and me such a dance through these hills——"

"Who,—Matilda?" asked his lordship.

"Yes, of course; who but she could contrive to keep one's eyes and feet from falling asleep for even one half-hour of the twenty-four?"

"But what's the matter?" said Lord Alfred, becoming serious.

"Why, she is—a matter which, the more I consider it, the more it demands an attention it does not deserve. It swells quite beyond the dimensions which even crinoline is entitled to in this very small and too-crowded star. You read Malthus and Sadler?"

"Of course," said Lord Alfred.

"But to what purpose, when you calmly countenance such a monstrous abuse of a mere human creature's legitimate space in the world?

It is altogether beyond my patience!" Cousin John stamped his foot in half-serious indignation.

"My own patience is worse tried," said Lord Alfred, reflectively.

"Yours, Alfred?"

"Read this, if you doubt it, and then decide." His lordship handed him the letter he had just received.

Cousin John read aloud:

"I hear from Bigorre that you are there, and that you are going to marry Miss Darcy——"

"What's this?" he said, looking up with a puzzled face.

"Read on to the end, and you'll discover," said Lord Alfred, quietly.

Cousin John began again:

"When we parted your last words recorded a vow——"

"Hang it!" he exclaimed, "this smells all over of violets and adventures. Was it a lock of your hair you promised her?"

"Read on, and you'll find out," said his lordship.

"I ask you, my lord, to return those letters."

"Humph! letters! the matter's worse than I thought. I have my misgivings."

"Well, read the rest, and give me your advice," said his cousin.

"Eh?—Where was I? Oh, yes: 'Miss Darcy will perhaps forego one brief page from the summer romance of her courtship——' Egad! for my part I'd forego every page of it and not break my heart!"

"Continue," said Lord Alfred, without noticing the comment.

Cousin John read on:

"——and spare you at least a single day from your place at her feet. I remain a month in these mountains, and the distance to Luchon is short. I trust you will feel that I desire nothing much. Your friend—Lucile."

"Bless me!" cried Cousin John. "The Countess of Nevers?"

"Yes," said his lordship, calmly.

"What will you do?"

"That's what I want you to tell me."

"You can't go."

"I must."

"And Matilda?'

"Oh, you must arrange that."

"Must I?" said Cousin John, perversely. "Well, I decline it flat. In an hour I expect the horses at the door. Matilda has her habit on even now. Before I have finished my breakfast I, of course, receive a message for 'dear Cousin John: I must leave the bracelet which *you* broke last night at the jeweller's; I must

call for the music. Dear Alfred is right, the black shawl looks best. *Will* I change it? Of course I can just stop, in passing, to order the horse. *Will* I see the dog-doctor?' Hang Beau!" broke out Cousin John, "I will not!"

"Tush, tush, this is serious!" exclaimed Lord Alfred.

"It is!" said Cousin John.

"Very well, then, you must think——"

"But what excuse will you make, Alfred?"

"Oh, tell Miss Darcy that—— Lend me your wits, Jack. The deuce! can't you stretch your genius to answer a friend's needs?"

"My dear friend," said Jack, "you know Matilda is as jealous as Othello."

"You're joking."

"No, I'm perfectly serious. Now, why go to Luchon?"

"Don't ask me. My dear John, I have no choice. Besides, I can't help owning up to a strange sort of desire to kindle the last spark of my youth and romance and all that once again before I extinguish it forever."

"You had better go hang yourself," muttered Cousin Jack.

"No,—were it only to make sure that the past is shut off from the future it would be worth the step back. Do you think we should learn to survive that wild moment when we consigned

our heart's dearest to the tomb, if the tomb were not locked by Fate for our sake?"

"Nonsense!" cried Jack, impatiently.

"Not wholly so, Jack. The man who gets up from the banquet satisfied goes contentedly to bed and enjoys his night's rest. But he who has dined with kings and yet starved himself, watched the wine flow and only half tasted it,—he who has wasted one part of life's grand possibilities,—be sure that man will bear a blighted existence to the end. You may call it a virtue if you will; I call it a sin."

"Which reminds me," said Cousin John, "of that hoary old Lothario who was asked at the end of his life if anything weighed on his mind. 'Well, no,' said he, 'I think not. My life was a pleasant one in most things, and I never neglected an occasion for pleasing myself. On the whole, I have nothing to regret.'"

"Well, which is best, Jack, regret or remorse?"

"Why, regret," answered Jack, confidently.

"No; remorse," said Lord Alfred. "They are near relations, however: Regret is a spiteful old maid; but her brother, Remorse, though a widower, *has* been wedded to young Pleasure. Hang regret, my dear Jack!"

"*Bref*, then, you mean to go?"

"*Bref*, I do."

Cousin Jack pondered a moment.

"One more word, then. Are you really in love with Matilda?"

"Love? What a question! Of course I am."

"*Were* you really in love with Madame de Nevers?"

"What, Lucile? No, by Jove, never,—really."

"Is she pretty?" asked Cousin John, tentatively.

"Decidedly," was the answer; "or at least she was ten summers ago. She was as soft and sallow as autumn, with hair neither black nor brown,—it had that tinge the atmosphere takes on a September evening when the light of the setting sun lingers through a vineyard. There was something in her set you to thinking of those strange backgrounds of Raphael's, that deep, brief, hectic twilight in which the southern suns fall asleep."

"Coquette?" asked Jack briefly, as if in deprecation of his cousin's emotion.

"Not at all. That was her one fault. I could have loved her better if she had loved me less."

"Women change so," was Jack's laconic comment.

"To be sure," Lord Alfred quietly acquiesced.

"And, unless rumor errs," went on Jack, "I believe the Comtesse de Nevers was the rage last year at Baden,—held an absolute court of

devoted adorers and made no end of game of her subjects."

"Indeed," said Lord Alfred, with just a hint of annoyance in his voice.

"When she broke off her engagement with you, it seems her heart did not break with it."

"Would you have her dress in black and shut herself up in a convent? Besides, it was my fault the engagement was broken, not hers."

"Most likely it was," said Cousin Jack. "How did it happen, anyway?"

"The tale's soon told. She bored me, and I showed it. She saw I was bored, and reproached me with it. I retorted. She grew vexed, of course; and I was vexed that she was. She sulked, and so did I. Then I became submissive. She softened; but I hardened. I was banished at noon and pardoned again at evening. She said I had no heart. I said she had no reason. I swore she talked nonsense. She sobbed that I was hateful. In short, my dear fellow, it was time for things to come to a crisis. She released me; but I lingered,—she thought, with too sullen an aspect. This gave me occasion to fly into a rage, mount my horse, and declare myself uncomprehended. So we parted. You know the rest of the story."

"Indeed I do not," said Jack, eagerly.

"Well, we parted, as I said. We could not continue to meet,—it was awkward. I think I acted exceedingly well, considering the time and place, for Paris was charming just then. It broke up my plans for the whole winter. I asked to be changed,—wrote for Naples, which was then vacant,—got it,—and so joined my new post at once; but scarcely had I reached it when my first news from Paris informed me that Lucile was ill and in danger. I travelled back with all speed, and found her recovered but still looking pale. I was seized with contrite regret, and I asked to renew the engagement."

"And she?" Cousin John was deeply interested.

"She reflected, but finally declined. We parted, swearing to be friends forever,—but friends only. We kept each other's letters, a portrait, and a ring, with a pledge to return them whenever they should be called back."

Lord Alfred stopped. There was just a touch of real sadness mingled with his mocking tone, but Cousin John did not notice this in his desire to hear more.

"Pray go on," he said.

"My story's finished," said his lordship. "Of course I enjoined upon Lucile all the thousand good maxims we invent to supply the grim deficit in our days when they are left bankrupt

by love. I preached and she obeyed. She went out into the world and took to dancing again. I went back to my post and cultivated an entirely new taste for Antiques and Elzevirs. There, Jack, I believe you know the whole story."

Cousin John was thoughtful.

"You really mean to go back, then?" he said, after a moment's silence.

"Where?" asked Lord Alfred.

"To that worst of places, the past."

"My honor's pledged to it. It was a promise, I tell you, when we parted."

"Well, then," said Jack, resigned, "what is it you wish me to do?"

"You must tell Matilda that I meant to have called to leave word—to explain,—but the time was pressing and——"

"My lord, your lordship's obedient," said Jack, with a low bow, "but I can't do——"

"You wish to break off my marriage, then?" Alfred was hurt at his persistence.

"No, no! But, indeed, I can't see why you need take these letters yourself."

"Not see? Would you have me break a promise my honor is pledged to?"

Jack hummed the words of a song: "'Off, off, and away! said the stranger.'"

"Oh, you scoff!" said Alfred, with a show of indignation.

"Scoff at what, my dear Alfred?"

"At everything."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I see the dew of youth is quite rubbed off of you; you have no feelings left in you,—even for me. You jest at honor; you are as cold as a stone to the voice of friendship; you carry a blight about with you; you——"

"Is that all?" interrupted Cousin Jack, at the first semblance of a pause. "Well, then, listen to me. I suppose that when you made up your mind to propose to Miss Darcy you weighed the gains with the drawbacks carefully. Now, what is there left but to stick to your choice? You want money: here it is; a settled position: it is yours; a career: by this means you secure it, and at the same time you get a young and pretty wife. Why must you itch to be running away from all this to a woman whom you have never once missed in all these years? The letter is a palpable trap to my thinking. The woman has changed and yet seeks to renew her youthful romance. I'll stake my last farthing she's a coquette to the end of her fingers. Perhaps she simply wants to win a triumph over a once reckless lover, but why should you help her? You are risking the substance of all you have schemed for, and for what?—merely a mad dream."

"But there's nothing to risk, Jack. You exaggerate! I'll be here again in three days at most." Lord Alfred was vexed at his cousin's stupidity.

"Yes, but how?" persisted Jack: "discontented and unsettled; so sulky your betrothed will break off the engagement in a huff. Three days, do you say? But who knows what may happen in three days?"

This was an unanswerable question, and Lord Alfred gave it up. But nevertheless he signified no intention of following Cousin John's counsel, and his good-natured relative therefore withdrew from the contest and submitted to his decree. Having come to terms, Jack helped Lord Alfred to pack a slender valise whose dimensions excluded a large outfit,—the sole concession his remonstrance had obtained,—then cursing his stars and in no very amiable frame of mind, he shook hands and returned to Miss Darcy.

Before Lord Alfred had quitted his chamber he turned for a last look through the window; and, for reward, saw Matilda ride by with her beaming cheeks and golden hair. He sighed as he looked at her. Did he regret her, with her dainty hat and habit, her arch rosy lips and blue eyes that showed an impertinent little look of wonderment, her round figure and fair neck below the drooping feather? I can only protest

that if *I* had the chance of passing three days in the light of those eyes, and of caressing the hand that patted that fine English mare, I should grieve deeply to be deprived of one little half-hour of so pleasant a pastime!

At any rate, whatever the feelings may have been which prompted it, the truth is that Alfred Vargrave did actually sigh as he watched Miss Darcy ride past his window.

II.

Notwithstanding that Lord Alfred Vargrave was by nature vacillating and unsteady of purpose, he despatched a reply very promptly to the Comptesse de Nevers. In it he signified his intention of setting forth the same day for Luchon, where, he informed her, a line addressed to him at Duval's, the hotel where he meant to stay, would find him awaiting her orders.

In an hour from the time he wrote this he was on his way, giving rein to his steed as well as his thoughts, through the blue solitudes of the mountains. The September moon, now half at the full, was unfolding from the darkness, and the hills seemed to watch, as if well pleased, the light-streams dancing and singing down their steep marble stairs.

Lord Alfred was pensively puffing his cigar

and humming broken snatches of an old opera,—thinking perhaps of the castles in Spain hid from his view by the rocky barrier,—when, suddenly, a horseman emerged out of the night, and so startled his steed, which was wandering on at will, that if his ready hand had not immediately seized the rein both rider and horse might have been hurled over the grim precipice.

As soon as the momentary alarm had subsided and the ever-ready oath of the thoroughbred Englishman had safely exploded, Lord Alfred unbent, and looking no ruder than such an inroad would warrant, surveyed the newcomer. He was a man of his own age or less, well mounted and richly, though simply, dressed. He wore his beard in the French fashion; and his pale face gathered force from the glance of a pair of dark, vivid, and eloquent eyes.

With a gesture of apology, he lifted his hat and bowed courteously, making some excuse in French, which denoted the Parisian from the first syllable.

Upon hearing him speak, Lord Alfred discerned the stranger to be a man of good-breeding whom one might safely meet after dark. The stranger, in turn, seemed equally well disposed towards his fellow-traveller; and thus, pleased as they were with each other, they rode on slowly abreast.

"I see, sir, you are a smoker," said the stranger; "allow me——"

"Pray take a cigar," returned Lord Alfred, offering his case.

"Many thanks! Such cigars are a luxury here. Do you go to Luchon?"

"Yes; and you?"

"Yes. I fear, though, since our road is to be the same, that our journey must be somewhat closer than our acquaintance. I am tempted to ask your permission to finish the cigar you have given me in your company."

"Charmed, sir, to discover your road lies in the way of my own inclinations," said Lord Alfred. "I find the dream of your nation in this weed. It is a talisman from the distant savannas that makes all men who use it brothers. Who knows but the blaze which broke out awhile ago from the Boulevart has ended where wisdom begins,—in smoke?"

"Yes," said the stranger; then pointing ahead: "Ah, what a scene!"

Lord Alfred took a puff or two of his cigar in silence.

"Nature is too pretentious here," he said, at last. "One likes to be coaxed, not compelled to notice such beauty. She seems to be saying too plainly, 'Admire me,' and I answer, 'Yes, madam, I do; but you weary me.'"

"That sunset just now, though," began the stranger.

But Lord Alfred cut him short with a contemptuous exclamation.

"A very old trick," he said. "One would think the sun would be tired of blushing at what by this time he must know too well to be shocked at,—the world, I mean."

"Ah, it's so with all of us," said the stranger. "It is the sinner who knew the world best at twenty who disdains its follies most at sixty. You stay at Luchon?" he asked, abruptly.

"Only a day or two," replied Lord Alfred.

"The season is over."

"Already?"

"It was shorter this year than last. Folly soon wears out her shoes. She dances so fast we are all tired."

"You know the place well, then," said Lord Alfred, turning to look in his face.

"I've been there two seasons."

"And who, pray, is the Belle of the Baths at the present moment?"

"The same who has been the belle of every place where she is seen; the belle of Paris all last winter; the belle of Baden in the spring."

"Quite uncommon!" said Lord Alfred.

"Sir, an uncommon beauty!" exclaimed the stranger, warmly. "I should say, rather, an

uncommon character. One meets women every day whose beauty is equal to hers, but none who have the charm of Lucile de Nevers."

"Madame de Nevers!" cried Lord Alfred, turning round in his saddle with astonishment.

"Do you know her?" asked the stranger.

"I know—or, rather, I knew her—a long time ago—I almost forget," stammered Lord Alfred. He was incoherent with surprise and wonder.

"What a wit! what grace in her language, her movements!" went on the stranger, noticing nothing. "What play in her face! and yet she seems to conceal some deep sadness."

"You speak like a lover," said his lordship, venturing all on a single throw.

"I speak as I feel, but not like a lover. What interests me so in Lucile, at the same time forbids me. I can give to my interest only the name we men give to an hour's admiration,—a night's passion——"

"Yes, I quite comprehend," said Lord Alfred, insensibly relieved. "But this sadness which you speak of,—it would almost make me afraid your gay countrymen have grown less adroit since I knew them in Paris—and terrible rivals they were then—if they lack the skill to console this regret. I take it for granted, of course, that they did not want the will."

The stranger displayed some irritation.

"I've heard," said he, "that an Englishman—one of your nation, I presume,—and, if so, I must beg you to excuse the contempt which I——"

"Pray proceed, sir," said Lord Alfred, coolly puffing his cigar. "My compatriot, you were about to say,—what was his crime?"

"Oh, nothing," laughed the stranger; "his folly scarcely merits so exalted a term. It was not the sin, but the silliness, I blame him for."

"How's that?"

"Well, I own I hate botany, yet I admit that there may be some reason for the ruthless dissection of the botanist; but the stupid and mischievous boy who uproots and tramples the exotics solely for pastime, one would wish to catch him and soundly flog him."

"Some compatriot of mine, then, I understand, has injured your Rosebud of France with his cold Northern heart?" Lord Alfred put the question tentatively between the puffs of smoke.

"Sir," said the stranger, "I know little or nothing. But some faces bear the last act of a tragedy in their looks, notwithstanding that the first scenes are wanting. It is not hard to divine what the plot may have been and what sort of actors took part in it. Whenever I gaze upon Lucile's face, with its passionless languor,

I feel that some emotion has burnt up there all the health and hope."

"Humph!" was Lord Alfred's response; then, after a pause, "I see you have finished your cigar, sir; can I offer you another?"

"No, thank you; we are not two miles from Luchon."

"You know the road well."

"I have often been over it."

Here there was a pause. They rode on side by side in the moonlight, each silently following the train of his own thought. Then, at last, as if roused from a deep revery, they almost shouted at sight of the Baths which burst on them through the distance, shining silverly under the moon. There were the long lime-tree alleys; the dark paths with the lamps twinkling through them; and the quaint wooden roofs of the white houses. The clatter of horses and the music of the wandering bands came up the steep hill at remote intervals, mingled with the clacking of whips; and here and there, through the verdant rose-gardens, sheltered behind acacias and evergreens, they could mark the white dresses moving about and catch the echo of gay songs.

At length the two horsemen alighted and exchanged their last greetings at the door of the inn l'Herisson, well pleased to have reached it. The Frenchman invited Lord Alfred to dinner; but

he declined, saying he had to write letters and felt tired. He therefore dined that night in his own rooms. He watched his companion depart with an unquiet eye. He could not give a reason for it, yet he felt towards him a deep displeasure. "The fellow's good looking," he muttered to himself, "and yet not a coxcomb." Some ghost of the past still vexed him. "If he loves her," he thought, "let him win her." Then he turned to the future, and ordered his dinner.

Lord Alfred found a note from Lucile waiting for him at his hotel, which he secured at once.

"Your letter has reached me," she wrote. "Alas, this evening I must go to the ball, and shall not be home. But to-morrow, *sans faute* at one, you will find me in and alone. Meanwhile, let me thank you sincerely, milord, for the honor with which you fulfil your pledge. Yes, I thank you, indeed, Lord Alfred! To-morrow, then, at one."

It would be hard to describe the feelings with which Alfred Vargrave flung down this note and turned to pour out his wine. "Yes, Jack's right after all," he muttered. "The coquette!"

"Does milord mean to go to the ball?" asked the waiter, who lingered.

"Perhaps. I don't know. You may keep me a ticket in case I should."

The wasp settled undisturbed over the fruit

and wine, for Lord Alfred had finished his meal in no very amiable temper and had drawn his chair to the window, where he languidly lit a cigarette. The window was open, and the warm air waved the flame of the candles. The moths flew about him as he sat brooding alone there in the gloom; but gay sounds floated up from below with the deepening night. The lamps began to twinkle through the dark avenues, and the idlers of Luchon went past by twos and threes. As he turned his head to watch them, Lord Alfred suddenly beheld his late travelling companion passing the inn. He was in full toilet, with boots varnished, and a snowy cravat, and he was gayly smoothing and buttoning a yellow kid glove as he turned down the avenue. Lord Alfred, watching above, saw by the way hats were raised and glances turned that he was a person of rank or fashion.

By and by the stranger's form was lost in the distance, but Lord Alfred still sat by himself in the gloom. He had smoked a dozen or more cigarettes, and had thought of his cousin, of Matilda, of Lucile, and, not a little, of himself, —of his past life, his future, and his present. A thousand subjects passed through his head, mingling love, his debts, his digestion, and even his dinner. At last he concluded the night would be stupid beyond endurance if he thought

of such matters any longer, so he resolved to get ready and set out for the ball.

Before he had finished his toilet he had spoiled and flung away in a pet half a dozen white neckcloths. In drawing them on he split up three pairs of pale lavender gloves,—this is no doubt the reason why, as he hurriedly entered the Casino, he heard the church-clock strike twelve.

The last waltz was just over. The chaperons and dancers were in a fluttering crowd about the door, and a buzz went through the room as a young man, whose face Lord Alfred had seen before he entered, left the ball-room with a lady leaning on his arm, who looked like a queen in some old fairy-tale.

The hubbub of comment and praise reached Lord Alfred just as he crossed the threshold.

"*Ma foi!*" said a Frenchman at his side. "Luvois has got all the gifts of the gods: rank, wealth, good looks! 'He that hath shall have more,' and that's the reason why he goes off to-night distinguished above us all by *la charmante Lucile's* beautiful eyes."

"Is it true Luvois will marry her?" asked an aggressively fat lady of another at her side, who looked like a needle, all steel and tenuity.

The needle seemed as if it were about to drive a stitch through somebody's reputation.

"Madame," remarked a young man at her elbow, "I am ready to bet my new Tilbury that if Luvois has proposed the Comtesse has refused him."

The fat and thin ladies were highly amused by this sally.

"Refused! What, a young duke, not thirty, with at least half a million a year?"

"That may be," said another; "yet I know that some time since Castelmar was refused, though he is as rich, and a prince beside. But Luvois, who was never before in love with a woman who was not a wife, is now most certainly serious."

The music began anew; but Lord Alfred felt that the ball was a bore and returned to his inn somewhat the worse for his adventure.

As he lounged at his window above the dark valley musing as before, spirits of love were wandering through the warm land. A soft breeze stirred the white drapery of the window and the crickets chirped in the blossoming acacia outside. A scent of roses faintly came through the night and the moon dreamed far away on the mountains.

A stone's throw from the hotel a white châlet peeped between large lime-trees in a garden of roses. The windows were open down to the lawn and the casements were drawn up.

Lights streamed from inside, and with them came out the sound of music and song. In the garden was a table laden with fruits, wine, tea, and ices. About it sat half a dozen young men and women. Light, laughter, and voices all rippled through the quiet limes. Lord Alfred seemed to see for one moment at the window the fair and familiar outline of a white dress, a white neck and dusky hair. It hovered only an instant or so, then passed into shadow, and the soft notes of a piano floated forth, while an unforgotten voice sang a pathetic ballad.

III.

The châlet of the Comtesse de Nevers at Luchon was at the base of a mountain of firs and in the midst of a rose-garden. It was revealed to the road, but peacefully withdrawn from its noise; and its deep gables were built of sweet, resinous woods.

As Lord Alfred ascended the steep garden paths, the noonday sun had mingled the carnations and heliotropes with the balms which floated down from the wooded slopes above. A breeze was playing at the windows and the white curtains floated in and out. The house was hushed; but his ring at the door brought out an old negress, whose sable head shined like a polished cocoanut under the snowy foulard which

bound it. Lord Alfred sprang forward eagerly. He remembered Lucile's nurse, whose eyes and teeth used to beam when he came in the blithe days of yore. The old woman had fondled Lucile on her knee when in her infancy she left India to pine away in Paris. She had soothed the child's sobs on her breast as she read the letter which told her that her father was dead. He had been a shrewd adventurer, strong of will, with subtle tact and soft manners, who had lived a checkered existence, though he bore a noble name. Scarcely had he settled at Mysore, in the smile of a rajah, whose court he gained control of, and scarcely had he married an Indian wife of great wealth, who died in giving birth to this daughter, when he himself was carried to his wife's tomb. His fortune, which fell to his orphan daughter, had secured her a home in France with his sister, a lone woman who was the last of her race.

Lucile neither wished nor affected to hide her half-Eastern blood, which brought to her strange character something almost wild. The nurse had parted with the orphan for a while at the door of a Parisian convent; but later had gained her mistress again, when Lucile had been married by her grim aunt, to a dreary old count, who had died sullenly with no claim upon the tears of his youthful bride.

"Your mistress expects me," said Lord Alfred.

The old woman opened the drawing-room door and left him there alone.

Silence and perfume rested over this temple of grace. No sound reached it. The delicate shades of the acacias wavered across the white curtains. Fragrant white Indian matting lay upon the polished wooden floor, and rich flowers gathered by Lucile herself hung in light olive baskets at both door and window. Lord Alfred felt that he stood in the shrine of sweet thoughts. All was pure and tranquil. No vestige of a young woman's coquetry troubled the place. Everything seemed self-possessed and aware of the silence.

Lord Alfred stood by the window. A light breeze lifted the leaves one by one. Just then Lucile entered the room, but he did not see her. His face was turned away in a strange revery.

The time had been when Lucile, in beholding that man, could not have suppressed the rapture and fear which touched every nerve in her heart. Now she gazed at him calm, smiling,—perhaps indifferent.

Happening to turn, Alfred Vargrave unawares encountered her face. Her soft, dusky hair streamed over her snow-white bodice, and she held a half-blown rose-bud in her hand. A pensive smile hovered in her eyes.

Lord Alfred gave a sharp cry of surprise. Some unknown agitation—a strange tremor—confused his wit. It was entangled and paralyzed, and for once rebelled. He looked at her without speaking a word. Perhaps what troubled him most was, that the face had so little in it he remembered. The face he had so long cherished in his memory was faded with tears. Grief had famished the figure and dimmed the eyes. But that gracious and fond *coquetterie* of a woman who knows that her least ribbon is dear to him who beholds it, this Lord Alfred had never admired in Lucile before. The woman who now met his look without a thought of shrinking seemed to bask in the sumptuous haze of a second summer riper than the first. Lucile had acquired that matchless but unconscious demand for homage which none but a churl would withold. Her figure, though slight, had revived everywhere to the luxurious proportions of youth, and her hair, once shorn as an offering to passionate love, now floated or rested abundantly over her pure forehead and throat; under which, gathered loosely by a single violet knot, reposed the milk-white folds of her cool garment. Her simple attire revealed at all points that fine art which artfully conceals its own presence.

Lord Alfred never conceived that Lucile could

look so enchanting. He felt tempted to kneel at her feet and implore her pardon. But the calm smile that met his eyes sufficed to recall the pride and bitterness needed to meet the occasion.

"Madam," he began, in a voice fully reassured, "you see that your latest command has gained my immediate obedience. I presume I may consider my freedom now restored."

"I had thought," she replied, with a smile that was both sad and gay, "that you had long had your freedom from me. I did not flatter myself that you still rested in my chains."

"For Heaven's sake, madam, do not jest! Has the moment no sadness for you?"

"It is an ancient tradition," she returned, "a tale too often told,—a burden sure to come at the end of all love-legends. At twenty we believe our frail vows eternal; we smile with confident pity at the results of all poor human love. The error is a noble one. Shall we blame it because we survive it? No, no,—it was the youth of our youth, my lord."

Lord Alfred was mute. He remembered her as a child, blindly yielding herself to the errors of life and borne down by the tumult of passion. To watch her now, as she pronounced the death-warrant of all the illusions of that life and lifted the pall from the bier of the dead Past,—this

woman so fair and young, yet her own self-survivor, who traced her life's epitaph with so cold a finger,—it was a picture that deeply pained his self-love. He himself knew, no one better, the things to be uttered on such subjects; yet he bowed down his head, and with a trouble he could not control, crumpled the letters in his hand.

"You know enough of my nature," she continued, "to know that I do not recall these pledges of what was perhaps once a foolish affection from any motives of prudence. If you have such a doubt, I need only remind you to dispel it, that for ten years these letters have rested in your hands unclaimed."

She seemed to suggest a reproach by these words, and Lord Alfred looked up to meet it. His gaze had been fixed with profound connoisseurship upon a blue Sèvres cup; but now he looked directly into her face to see if it would reveal any jealousy of Miss Darcy. He looked keenly and long, but it was in vain.

"You are generous, madam," at last he said. A slight irony vibrated in his voice. He had looked for reproaches, and fully arranged his forces to meet them. But the enemy straightway changed its position.

"Come," Lucile gayly interposed with a smile of divine sweetness, disclosing a depth in her

nature he had never known. At the same time she tenderly laid her hand on his. "Come, don't think I abuse the occasion. We gather justice and judgment with years, or else the years were futile. You shall not hear a single reproach from me. I have sinned to myself and to the world,—and I fear to you, chiefly. The woman who loves should indeed be the friend of the man she loves. Rather than seek to allure his life into impossible destinies, she should use all her skill to make his sole place in the world lie in her own heart. Alas! I perceived this truth too late. I tormented your youth and I have darkened your life. Forgive me the wrong I have done for the sake of its long expiation."

Lord Alfred seemed to wander in a waking dream. He found himself suddenly changed from a criminal to a judge who was besought for mercy. In that moment the world's foolish pride was as nothing. All his plausible theories were posed. He bowed his head, thrilled by the beauty of the nature which had been revealed to him. He said a few faint words of self-reproach as he lifted her hand to his lips. It was a white, delicate and dimpled hand, warm and languid as a woman's hand in youth. The more he looked and listened the more he discovered perfections before unknown. This

woman who had survived the romance of which he was the hero seemed more charming a thousand times over than of old. They talked of the years since they had parted; Lucile asked many questions with a sisterly interest. She spoke of Lord Alfred's new life, of Miss Darcy, her face, her temper, her accomplishments. Then she told with wit and humor about the journeys she had taken, the books she had read, and all that might interest him; yet in everything she said there appeared to him an amiable irony.

Time flew by unobserved to Lord Alfred. He abandoned himself with the ardor which belongs to a mind accustomed to change, and sought with delicate devices to surprise from Lucile the true state of her heart. But his efforts were vain. The woman, as is always the case, was more adroit than the man, and baffled every endeavor to entrap her.

Suddenly a sharp ring was heard from the hall. A quick footstep stirred in the passage. The negress knocked at the door, then thrust in her head.

"The Duke of Luvois has just entered, and insisted——"

"The Duke!" cried Lucile, while his approaching step made a light echo outside. "Say I do not receive until the evening. Explain that I have business of private importance."

She glanced significantly towards Lord Alfred.

At the sound of the Duke's name there had come over Lord Alfred a deep sense of vexation. He saw a look of confusion in Lucile's face, and he instantly concluded that it was caused by his presence.

"Do not let me interfere with other claims on your time," he said, sneeringly; "allow me to wait on you when you are free from more pleasant engagements;" but the words were scarcely uttered before he wished them recalled. He bitterly read his mistake in Lucile's flashing eyes. Inclining her head with a haughty movement more reproachful than a direct rebuff, she resumed her seat, saying merely,—

"Tell the Duke he may enter."

Vexed with his own words as well as hers, Alfred Vargrave bowed low, passed through the casement and entered the garden.

Before his shadow had vanished from the room the Duke stood at the door.

When he was alone Lord Alfred seemed strange even to himself. The last look from Lucile had bewildered him. The Duke's visit goaded him to desperation. He had not yet given up the letters. He must call again. He resolved to stay where he was till the Duke went out. He would stay, were it only

to know when he did go. But just as he had formed this resolution he saw, between the thick leaves of the laurels, Lucile and the Duke approaching him. His first thought was to seek for some nook from which he might retreat from the garden. They had not yet seen him. The sound of their feet and voices had warned him in time. They were walking towards him. The Duke was speaking with the gestures of a Talma. Lord Alfred saw at a glance they barred the only path to the gateway; but an arbor stood near by, deeply hidden in foliage. He slipped in, safe from observation, and they passed on in front of him still conversing. They paused beneath a laburnum and sat down on a bench in the shade, so close that he could not avoid hearing their words.

"Duke," Lucile said, "I scarcely conceive——"

"Ah, forgive me! I desired so deeply to see you. You retired from the ball so early last night. This whole week you have been pale, silent, preoccupied. Speak, speak, Lucile, and forgive me! I know that I am a rash fool,—but I love you! I love you, madame, more than language can say! My love is not a caprice. It is strange to my nature. It has made me a new being. I implore you to save me. Be my wife! stoop and raise me up to you!"

Lord Alfred could scarcely restrain the pang

of anger with which he heard this. The laurel leaves were shaken as if by some unfelt wind, and the two in converse started at the sound. He could hear Lucile's low voice, but its tone was so faint that her answer escaped him.

Luvois hurried on as though in remonstrance.

"I know it, Lucile, but your heart was not broken by the trial. Rather all its fibres were proven by it. You may mistrust love, yet you need to be loved. You mistake your own feelings. What you may have suffered can only impart more profound pity to the love I feel for you. Hush, hush! I know all. Tell me nothing!"

"You know all, Duke? Well, then, know that I have learned from the rude lesson taught me in my youth to shelter my life from my own heart. To mistrust the heart of another."

"Oh, madame!" he answered, "you trifle with a feeling which you know to be true. It is not my life alone, Lucile, that I plead for. If I read your nature truly, it is for yours as well. That nature will prey on itself; it was made to influence others. Consider; genius craves power,—what scope is there for it here? Gifts less noble give me command of the sphere in which genius *is* power. Do you despise such gifts? Yet you cannot disdain what they realize! I offer you a name not unknown, a fortune which is worthless without you. I lay down all my

life at your feet, and a heart which can throb for you."

"That heart, Duke, and that life—I respect them both. The name and position you offer, deserve what I now ask you——"

"Lucile!"

"I ask you to leave me——"

"You do not then——reject?"

"I ask you to leave me time to consider."

"You ask me—?"

"Time to consider."

"Say one word. May I hope?"

Lucile's reply was never known to Lord Alfred, for just then she rose and moved onward. The Duke bowed his lips over her hand and was gone.

There was not a sound saving the birds in the trees. When Alfred Vargrave reeled out into the sunlight again he just saw Lucile's white robe flutter away as she entered the house. Scarcely conscious of what he did, he followed her and went in also. He was unnoticed. Lucile never stirred, so wholly absorbed was she in thought. Her back was turned to the window. As he drew near the sofa her face was reflected from the glass. Her dark eyes were fixed upon the ground. She seemed pale, dejected, and lost in deep meditation. The afternoon sunlight streamed softly over her drooping shoulders.

Alfred Vargrave let fall an icy hand upon her arm. It was as clammy as death. She uttered a cry of fear and surprise, which told, all too cruelly, how far he was from her thoughts.

His whole face was disturbed with his effort to speak.

"It was not my fault. I have heard all! Now the letters—and farewell, Lucile! When you wed, may——"

The sentence broke short like a weapon that snaps with the weight of the man upon it.

Lucile's whole answer was revealed in the flush of quick color at her brow.

"Perhaps this is our last farewell in life, Alfred Vargrave. Let us part without bitterness. Here are your letters. Be assured I hold you no longer in bondage."

She gave a sad little laugh as she said this, and stretched out her hand with the letters. Angry with himself at feeling his anger rise and unable to depend on his powers of self-restraint, he thrust the packet in his bosom with a short sigh, bowed his head, and departed in silence.

And Lucile was alone. The men of the world were gone back to the world again. Her hand dropped, and out of it, loosened from their frail silken bond, fell those early love-letters, scattering at her feet! Her head was bowed on her bosom. She looked vaguely over these strewn

records of passionate moments never again to be. From each page leaped some words that belied the composure with which she had rejected the claims of those poor, perished days. But at last they avenged themselves, and she burst into tears.

IV.

Lord Alfred, lingering beyond his allotted three days in Luchon, received an urgent letter from Cousin Jack entreating him to return to Bigorre, where his affairs were growing awkward. He himself was now impatient to leave Luchon, and he promptly engaged Bernard, a trusty guide, and set forth homeward by a new route over the mountains. As they journeyed onward, the serpentine road unexpectedly brought to sight a gay cavalcade only a few feet in advance of them. Alfred Vargrave's heart beat wildly. He saw instantly the slight form of Lucile in the midst of the riders. His next look showed him that the Duke was joyously ambling beside her. He did not know the rest of the group, nor did he notice them. They were laughing and talking together, but his sudden appearance suspended their gayety.

"You here!" exclaimed Lucile in surprise. "I imagined you were far on your way to Bigorre. What has delayed you?"

"I am on my way," he said; "but, since my

way would seem to be also yours, let me ride for a moment beside you——" He stooped to her ear and murmured, "and forgive me!"

By this time the troop had all come up. Lucile was pale, and the Duke, observing it, had never quitted her side. Alfred smiled. "He is jealous of her," he thought, and this added a spur to his resolution to please her. He talked wittily and unceasingly and was entirely at his ease.

At noon the clouds, which had been rising slowly in the east, gathered closer and lifted higher. The wind changed and grew chilly. A confused hissing noise ran up the trees as though out of the ground. The guides sniffed the air like chamois. They looked at each other and halted, unbuttoning the cloaks from the saddles. The aspens rustled and turned up their frail leaves in fright. Everything in nature announced the approach of the tempest.

Before long thick darkness came down among the mountains and a vivid flash gored the gloom. The rain fell in large heavy drops. Then the thunder broke.

The horses took fright. The Duke's nag was far away in a moment. The guides whooped after him. The band was obliged to alight, and dispersed up the perilous path.

Through the darkness and awe around him

Lord Alfred could see, now and again revealed by the fierce glare of the lightning, a woman all alone on a shelf of the mountain. She was as still as the rock on which she sat. All terror and all love added speed to the instinct with which he rushed up to her. She started at his approach, and the lightning once again surrounded her with its flickering halo. Alfred Vargrave seized her hand. He felt the light fingers tremble.

"Look, look!" she cried, "the whirlwind has stricken yonder tree like the passion that brings destruction to the being it embraces. Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is around you!"

"Lucile! I hear—I see nothing but yourself. I can feel nothing here but your presence. My pride fights in vain with the truth that leaps from my lips. Yonder terrible heaven will avenge you if I lie when I swear I love. Beneath its tempest I humble my head and heart at your feet. Pardon me, Lucile, for the past! I implore your mercy for the future. By the power which invisibly touches us both, by the rights I have over you, Lucile, I demand——"

"The rights!" Lucile drew her hand from his.

"Yes, the rights! For what truer right can belong to man than in the future to repair the wrong of the past? I, who injured your heart,

urge the right to repair it! Be my wife, my guide, my good angel!"

He paused. A swift flush came over her face.

"And your pledge to another?" she said, in a voice marred by emotion.

"Hush!" he said. "My honor will live where my love lives. It were poor honor indeed to give that life of which you alone keep the heart. Could I live under those young eyes forever suppressing a lie? Alas, no! Your hand holds my destiny. I can never recall what my lips have avowed. The great crime of my existence has been to have known you in vain. Speak! Restore me the blessing I lost in losing you!"

She was silent; but Lord Alfred could feel the light hand and arm that reposed upon him thrill and tremble. Her dark eyes were half closed, but under their languid fringe was beaming a passionate softness. A glow of faint inward fire flushed transparently through the delicate olive hue of her averted cheek. Her rich bosom heaved, as a rose will from the struggles of an imprisoned bee.

Meanwhile the setting sun sent up his last smile to baffle the storm. The rear of the tempest drew slowly off in retreat, and night had already put forth a signal star.

The curls of Lucile's soft luxuriant hair had escaped from her dark riding hat, and Lord Alfred covered them with kisses. Neither he nor Lucile felt the rain, which had not yet ceased.

The Duc de Luvois came down the rough mountain road splashed and wet. His horse was limping and he made slow progress. The beast had just lost his footing and thrown his master over the brow of the mountain; but the Duke had leaped to a stone and the horse had scrambled to his feet again. Both rider and horse now showed traces of the disaster as they heavily footed their way through the mist. The horse's shoulder and the Duke's wrist were bruised and bleeding.

It was late when the party at last descended to Luchon. Lord Alfred escorted Lucile to her châlet in silence. As they parted she whispered low to him, "Alfred, you have made me an offer I know the worth of, believe me; but I cannot reply without time for reflection. Good-night,—not good-by."

"But this is the very same answer you made to the Duc de Luvois only a day since," he pleaded.

"No, Alfred! not the very same," she said, with a trembling voice. "If you love me, obey me. Wait for my answer till to-morrow."

V.

After leaving Lucile, Alfred Vargrave had time to review the rash step he had taken. His mind wavered between loyalty to the love he had parted from in Bigorre, to Matilda with infantine face and sad, reproachful eyes, and to this maturer beauty in Luchon, the choice of his youth. He felt little doubt what answer he should have from Lucile. Her voice and eyes still enraptured his heart. And yet he could not avoid acknowledging a vague sense of awe for her nature. There was something unknown behind all the beauty of her heart. He felt that she penetrated and prized whatever was noblest and best in himself; but he did not feel sure that he knew what remained lofty and lonely in her. Then her life, which had been so untamed and free, would she yield him her independence? But plunge himself as he would into the dejection aroused by such thoughts, he always escaped by exclaiming, "I love her, and everything else is as naught!"

His hand trembled strangely as he broke the seal of a letter from her which at last reached him. At the sight of the first words it dropped from his hand like a dead autumn leaf. He passed his hand hurriedly over his eyes, bewildered and incredulous. A sharp moan broke

from him. Then he picked up the note and hurriedly read it through.

"No, Alfred!" it began. "If the glamour of the past rose over the present when we first met, it has now rolled away, and our two paths are plain. Those two paths divide us. The hand which clasped mine once again belongs to another. Forgive me if I have made you forget what was due to yourself and her. Mine the fault and mine be the repentance. Let me own now, in acknowledging the fault, that I did not foresee the sorrow involved in it. I own that when the rumor of your engagement first reached me my heart and mind suffered intense torture. It was cruel to think that so much of the life of my life had been silently settled on another. Then I said to myself, There is but one hope of escape. The image which fancy seems to fashion from the solitude around the ruins of the past is a phantom. The being I loved is no more. What I hear in the silence and see in the void of life, is the young hero born of my own perished youth. His image rests in my heart unconscious of change and time. Could I but see it once again as time and change have made it,—have proof that the being I loved is really no more,—then I should wake from my dream and my life would again be reconciled to the world. So we met; but a danger has occurred that I

did not foresee: the danger to yourself! Happily for both of us, it has been discovered as soon as it was visible. We meet no more, Alfred Vargrave. I shall be far from Luchon when you read this letter. My course is decided. Doubt is over. My future is fixed. Do not suppose that I blame you. Perhaps, after all, it is you who are right. Best, then, all as it is. These words are life's good-night to the hope of the moment,—no more! If a tear fell upon this page, it was a friend's. So, farewell to the past and to you.

"LUCILE."

Thus the letter ended. The room seemed to turn round and round in the mist that was scorching his eyes. Grief and resentment half choked him. He passed from the chamber with an unsteady step. He thrust the letter in his breast and paced under the long lime-trees of Luchon in search of fresh air and solitude. Striding on, he finally reached a bare and narrow heath by the skirts of a wood. It was sombre and silent and blent well with his feelings. A small, ruined abbey stood by a mineral spring long abandoned and unknown. He sat down on a fragment of rock beside it and read over again the perplexing letter.

As he read on, the mist of resentment rolled from his mind and he began to feel the pathos

which breathed through it. Tears rose in his eyes and a strange, sweet hope came to his heart. He saw the truth now. Each word betrayed the love which the writer sought to conceal. His love was rejected for the sole reason that he was not free to give it.

True! he was not yet free, but could he not be so,—free as air to revoke that farewell and to sanction his own hopes? He had only to speak the truth to Matilda and she would instantly release him. Her relations would welcome a pretext for breaking off a match which they had acquiesced in solely at the whim of their spoiled child. And she herself! was her love deeper than a first joyous fancy succeeding the thought of her last doll? Was she able to feel a love like that of Lucile's? He would seek Matilda, obtain her release, and then fly to Lucile and again claim the love which he would be free to command.

Thus musing, he sat with the letter spread out on his knee, and was quite unconscious of the angry looks which an intruder was casting upon him. He neither saw the wan, stern face, nor heard the footsteps passing and repassing the lonely spot where he sat. At last a hoarse voice aroused him. He looked up and beheld the Duc de Luvois. With aggressive and ironical tones the Duke made a sneering allusion to

"the doubtless sublime reveries his trespass had interrupted."

"Milord would do better," he said, "to fold up a note which bears a handwriting too well known to have failed to attract my regard."

It was obvious to Lord Alfred that the Frenchman was bent upon picking a quarrel. A moment sufficed for his quick instinct to take in the situation. He felt that he could not expose his own name, or Lucile's, or Matilda's to the idle tongues that would bring down the odium of the world upon him if he should fight this man. Indeed, as he looked at the Duke's haggard countenance he was moved to pity by the change which had taken place in it. He therefore put by with some careless response each remark from the Duke, and finally, making a stern salutation, coldly but courteously rose and turned away.

The Duke put himself in the path, made a stride in advance, raised a hand and fixed his eyes upon him.

"Hold, Lord Alfred!" he commanded. "Away with disguise! I will own that I sought you out to fix a quarrel upon you. I can still justly do so; but I prefer to be frank. I admit of no rival either in fortune or rank to the hand of any woman. I love the Comtesse de Nevers. I believe, and still have the right to believe, that before you crossed me she would have been

mine. You return to her, and the woman is suddenly changed. You, who are now betrothed to another! You, whose name was coupled nearly ten years ago with Lucile's, because of ties which you broke! You, the man I reproached on the day our acquaintance began! You, who left her so lightly. I cannot believe that you love her as I love her; nor can I deem that you have the right so to love her. It is plain that there is but one way to settle this contest. Need I name it?"

Lord Alfred was moved by the earnestness of the Duke's plea, and he made a reply which he trusted might turn aside a quarrel he felt bound to avoid if he could. He tried to explain with stately urbanity that he also, at worst a fair rival, had not been accepted.

"Accepted!" cried the Duke. "Say first whether you are free to have made the offer?"

Lord Alfred was silent.

"Ah, you dare not reply!" exclaimed the Duke. "Why palter with me? You do not speak because you cannot deny that you stepped in between us from mere vanity and the desire to reclaim your lost ascendency. If you are sincere, milord, I ask only one word. Say that you renounce her. Then I will ask your forgiveness with all my heart, and there can be no quarrel between us."

Lord Alfred was galled and impatient. The Duke's tone aroused a strong irritation in him.

"You have not the right, sir," he said, "and still less the power, to make terms and conditions with me. I refuse to reply."

As a diviner may see in some occult figure a fate he cannot avert, so Lord Alfred foresaw in a moment all the evil results of the quarrel which was now imminent. There, face to face, amid the ruins and tombs, with a stern autumn sky overhead for witness, these two men had met on the narrow bridge dividing the past from the future. So small was the pathway that if one passed over the other must sink.

At that moment the sound of hoofs urged into speed smote sharply on the ear, and out from the edge of the forest emerged a horseman at full gallop. He appeared to be a guide, by the red silk sash around his waist and the long whip slung crosswise behind his short jacket. He wheeled his horse up the heath, leaped the rivulet, turned sharp from the bank, and, approaching the Duke, raised his woollen hat, then bowed low in the saddle, and delivered a note.

The two stood quite astonished. The Duke, with a gesture of apology, stretched out his hand and took the letter. He changed color, tore it open, and read its contents.

In a moment his whole aspect changed. A light came into his eyes and a smile played about his lips. Lord Alfred watched him with surprise as he turned and said gayly,—

"A pressing request from Lucile. You are quite right, Lord Alfred. You are not accepted —nor free to propose. Perhaps I am already accepted. But here's the letter; you can read it for yourself."

It was now Lord Alfred's turn to feel angered. But Lucile was not pledged to him by any ties which could sanction resentment. He did not speak, but took the letter and read it.

It was dated at Saint Saviour, and ran: "Your letter, which followed me here, detains me till I can see you again. I entreat you by all that you feel or profess, to come to me without a moment's delay."

Your letter! The Duke had been writing to her, then! Lord Alfred coldly shrugged his shoulders.

"Sir, do not let me detain you," was all he said.

The Duke smiled and bowed, placed the note in his bosom, and turned to the messenger.

"Say that your despatch will be answered before nightfall." He spoke half aloud, then glanced at his watch, mounted, and started back to the Baths.

Alfred Vargrave stood still. He was torn and

distracted in heart. He turned to Lucile's farewell letter to him: "Doubt is over. My future is fixed now, my course is decided." Her course? What! to wed this insolent rival!

At that moment he looked up and saw the Duke riding fast through the forest. The Frenchman waved his hand to him and sped out of sight. He felt that it would be dark before that man reached Saint Saviour, and a vague fear for her ran through his heart. He walked on heedlessly, but not in the direction of Luchon.

VI.

The Duke's horse was reeking with foam when at last he reached the door of a small mountain inn on the brow of a promontory overlooking a fierce torrent. He could see a shadow moving in a glimmering casement above, and at the door stood the old negress ready to welcome him.

"My mistress awaits you," she said, and instantly showed him up the rude stairway.

In a few moments he stood alone, behind a closed door, with Lucile.

She was in a gray travelling dress. Her dark hair, streaming down over it, was tossed now and then by the wind which came through the lattice. The dull flame in a brass lamp also waved to the little gusts of air, and by the light

of this the Duke could see that there was a faint hectic fire in her cheeks, and that her eyes had the lustre of fever.

"You relent?" he said. "My letter has changed your plans?" His voice sank, as if borne down with inward emotion.

"Your letter! Yes, Duke, for it threatened a man's life and a woman's honor."

"The last, madame, *not?*"

"Both," she said, firmly. "Blush, son of the knighthood of France, as I read your words. You say in this letter, 'I know now why you refuse me. It is for the man who has trifled with your heart once and now does it again. But he shall not! By man's last wild law I will seize upon the right to avenge the past for you and give the future freedom. That man shall not live to make you as wretched as you have made me!'"

"Well, madame," asked the Duke, "what do you see in these words to threaten the honor of a woman?"

"See! what word! do you ask? Every word! Woman's honor? Is there no dishonor, sir, in a woman whose smile men shudder at and say: In that smile there is a grave? No, you can have no cause, for you have no right in the contest. By all the human laws of man's heart and by all the sanctities of man's social honor I forbid it!"

The Duke dropped his eyes.

"I obey you," he said; "but let woman beware how she plays fast and loose with human woe and the storm in man's heart. Madame, it was your duty to have extinguished the hope you saw in me, but you should have done this from the first, for I feel that you knew from the first that I loved you."

This sudden reproach seemed to startle her. She raised a slow, wistful look to his face and gazed silently at it. His own looks were turned to the ground. When the first wild alarm was past, pity crept through her heart, and a tear, falling across her conscience, awoke it.

"Was I wrong? is it so? Hear me, then, Duke. You must feel that, whatever right you may have to reproach me, I may claim your esteem on one ground,—I at least am sincere. You say it was plain to me that you loved me from the first. But what if this knowledge came at a time when I felt most alone and least able to be so? a moment when I strove to emancipate my life from one haunting regret and once more fulfil a woman's destiny? Do you still blame me, Duke, that I did not then bid you refrain? Alas, I, too, hoped at that time!"

"Oh, say that thrice-blessed word again!" cried the Duke. "Say, Lucile, that you then deigned to hope——"

"Yes," she answered, "to hope that I could give you a free heart"

"Oh, Lucile!"

"Do you blame me," she went on, "that when I at last had to own to my heart that its hope was gone forever, I said to you, 'Hope no more'? I myself hoped no more."

The Duke answered with ill-suppressed wrath.

"What, then! you have only to see this man, and you take his worthless heart back to yours which he wronged so long ago!"

"It is not that," she murmured, brokenly, "but I cannot conceal that I still remember the past. I cannot accept all your gifts in return for a heart which is a ruin."

"Ruin though it be, trust me to rebuild and restore it!" he cried, approaching her.

She shrank back. The grief in her eyes answered "No!"

A fiercer emotion still took possession of him.

"Am I right? You reject *me*, then, and accept *him?*"

"I have not done so," she said, firmly.

"Not yet—no! But can you with as firm a voice promise me that you will not accept him?"

"Accept him? Is he free?" she eagerly asked.

"You evade me, madame. You will not say

what you feel. Might he not make himself free? Oh, you blush and turn away! Dare you openly look in my face and reply to one question? You tell me *I* may not hope: may he? What, silent! Let me alter the question. If he were released, might he then hope?"

"He might," she said, softly.

Those two whispered words let out in a single maddening moment all the fierceness and evil in the man's nature. The wild animal in his bosom was set free. Jealousy, the deadliest of all human passions, rushed upon him. He stared wickedly about the lonely place. No sound came through the darkness to that room save the roar and drip of the cataract far below. His spirit was driven beyond his control on the wind of a reckless emotion. He had thrown, and missed his last stake.

Lucile rose from the place transfigured with a saintly scorn in her countenance. Such a dread "Get thee behind me" was written on her forehead that the fiend himself would have shrunk back abashed into perdition. She rose and swept on to the door, then paused. As though from immeasurable distance she murmured,—

"Farewell! We have mistaken each other. One more illusion in my life is over. Duc de Luvois, adieu!"

He felt she was gone forever from that heart-breaking gloom.

"Come back; I repent!" he cried at last. But no sound disturbed the silence saving the roar of the waters. He walked to the window. A candle shone from a closed casement. As he watched it in his bewilderment it was extinguished. Then the sound of wheels at the inn-door aroused him. He ran down-stairs and reached the door just in time to see her depart upon the mountain road.

He rushed out heedlessly into the midnight, and went on and on till he sank exhausted among the dead leaves by the forest-side. A glimmering cross of gray stone stood for prayer at the edge of the trees. He sank powerless at its foot and hid his face in the dark weeds. He knew that from henceforth his whole life was divided: behind him a past forever lost, before him a future devoid of purpose. He sat on the damp mountain sod and stared sullenly up at the sky. One object alone glimmered through the darkness. It was the gray cross; but he turned from it with no touch of reverence in his soul, and set his face sternly towards the black road.

When the light of the dawn began to flicker in the east he was grimly riding across the forest towards Luchon.

Suddenly he beheld the pale face of a man, gray with the light of early morning upon it, peer through the autumn branches. With the sense of a strange second sight the Duke at once recognized the phantom-like face because of its eyes. They were the eyes of his rival, and were fixed upon him with a stern, sad inquiry. To meet it, a lie leaped at once to his own eyes. He answered the wistful look with another which in its calm smile conveyed beyond a doubt the announcement that he had triumphed. It seemed to say, The question your eyes would ask comes too late, Alfred Vargrave!

He rode by, and onward out of sight, leaving his false look of triumph behind him to rankle in the breast of his foe.

And surely it did rankle there. Lord Alfred, scarcely knowing or choosing his way, impelled by one wild hope and pursued by a wilder fear, had that evening strayed moodily on down the deserted highway, and on through the rich haze of sunset into the gradual night, which began, unnoticed by him, to shut everything from his view. He went unconsciously towards Saint Saviour; and not till the moon had sunk far down in the west did he notice the mile-stone scored on the face of the bare rock, and realize that he was but two hours' journey from the place where Lucile and Luvois must have met.

He looked about him and listened for the sound of a rider, but nothing stirred. He knew that day was approaching, and he resolved to proceed to Saint Saviour. At last, the morning, which broke chilly and forlorn through the trees, revealed the Duke riding towards Luchon.

He rushed onward, tearing a path through the thicket. He reached the inn door, roused the dreaming porter, and inquired for the Countess. The man rubbed his eyes. The Countess was gone.

"And the Duke?"

The man stared a sleepy inquiry.

"The stranger!" cried Lord Alfred. "The stranger who was here last night!"

The man grinned with a vacant intelligence.

"He, oh, ay, ay! He went after the lady."

Lord Alfred demanded no more. What! the Duke had passed the night in that lone inn with her? Was that look he had cast at him when they met in the forest thus explained?

The day was half turned to evening before he re-entered Luchon. He saw the Duke in the midst of a light crowd of babblers. He was gay, insolent, and noisy, and his eyes were sparkling with laughter. Lord Alfred glided with swift and menacing steps right through the throng. The Duke noticed him and stepped aside. He

grasped him cordially by the hand, whispering low,—

"Oh, how very right you were! There can never be any more contest between us. Milord, let us henceforth be friends." Then his gay laughter burst forth as before, echoed loudly by his train of young imitators.

Lord Alfred stood rooted to the spot. He felt weary and ill. What makes the Duke so gay? he thought. Suddenly he heard a name which stirred his whole heart into a tumult: Lucile de Nevers' name coupled gayly in some light and free allusion with the Duke's. Not so that it might give him the right to turn fiercely round upon the speaker, but still set to an irreverent compliment.

Slowly the world came gathering back again on its smooth downward course, usurping the place in his soul where the thought of Lucile lay enshrined. "No," he muttered, "she cannot have sinned. There are women who love liberty—but is she so? I will not believe it! But the world? What would it say? The look and laughter of this man! The insinuating question and slanderous joke! No, she is right,—we could never be happy. It is best as it is. I will write to her, and accept her farewell. Must we then part, Lucile? Ah, I feel it. We could not be happy. It was a dream."

With bowed head and moody steps he returned slowly to his inn.

As he passed by on entering, Lord Alfred noticed a travelling carriage drawn apart from the gate in the court-yard, packed with portmanteaus and mounted by post-boys ready to set off. He ordered his horse, then slowly went up to his room. It was twilight and the chamber was dark. He listlessly lighted a candle on the mantel-piece, and there a large stout visiting card caught his eye. The name was Sir Ridley MacNab. It was very familiar to him, for it was that of his own future uncle-in-law, Mrs. Darcy's rich brother, a shrewd puritan Scot whose sharp wits made the most of this world and the next.

As Lord Alfred vacantly brooded over the card, a waiter put his head through the door-way.

"Sir Ridley MacNab would like to speak with milord."

Alfred Vargrave could feel that there were tears on his cheeks. He brushed them away and glanced at the glass. He was scared by the pallor of his face, but he said in a calm voice,—

"Sir Ridley may enter."

Sir Ridley MacNab had fled away from the cares of business and sought the Pyrenees in company with his sister and niece for a sea-

son of recreation. He now found himself at Luchon, but was that night starting for Bigorre. He had heard of Lord Alfred's presence in Luchon, and that he, also, was about to set forth for Bigorre. As a storm seemed to be threatening, he proposed that they should travel in company.

Lord Alfred had been walking restlessly up and down, but after a pause, which not a little surprised Sir Ridley, he answered,—

"My dear Sir Ridley, allow me but a few moments—half an hour at the most—to conclude an affair of a very urgent nature—which, indeed, brought me here—before I accept your very kind offer."

"Why not?" said Sir Ridley; but before he had quite uttered the words Lord Alfred, with intense agitation, had descended, and was crossing the garden below. What passed through his mind no one could tell; but before another half-hour had gone by he was standing with Sir Ridley, firm and composed, with not a sign of agitation in his face. He accepted a seat in the carriage, and the two travellers embarked cheerfully upon their journey.

It wanted but two hours of noon when the fellow-voyagers passed through the wild little garden in front of the small house in Bigorre where their carriage had stopped. Matilda, fairer

than the garden blooms, sprang to him at once, with a face of sunny sweetness. She showed such gladness and radiant confidence, that his whole heart upbraided him.

"Look up, my sweet flower," he softly whispered. "My heart has returned to you as the bee returns to the rose."

"And will wander no more?" laughed Matilda.

"No more," he repeated. Then to himself. "Yes, it is over. My course, too, is decided. Was I blind, to have dreamed that these clever Frenchwomen could satisfy a plain English heart?"

VII.

It is at Ems that we next find Lord Alfred, and with him is Lady Vargrave, whom we left only a little while ago at Bigorre as plain Matilda Darcy. They seem to have grown half weary of each other already though the honeymoon has scarcely waned. It may have been the fault of the life they led, or it may have been due entirely to themselves; but it was unmistakably true that these two creatures had not found in each other what they had expected; a nameless something in the heart and mind was absent; and missing it, each felt a sadness which they could not explain.

But whatever the mysterious something was,

the world never noticed it in the light-hearted beauty and the gay wit, her husband. Praise followed Matilda wherever she went, and even Lord Alfred forgot the source of his disquietude now and again as she turned to him blushing from the flattery of those around her. At such moments she, also, would cease to regret her fate, and murmur, "Yes, he loves me,—this is love, then,—and yet——"

The Duc de Luvois and Lord and Lady Vargrave had encountered each other some few evenings after the arrival of the latter, in the gaming-room. The idlers from England and the idler from France shook hands cordially. An acquaintance at Ems is a treasure to most people, and, besides, these men of the world were both too well-bred to betray any discourteous remembrance of the past. Their greeting was most frank and pleasant, and their intercourse became frequent during the succeeding days. This, then, is no doubt the reason why Lord Alfred one night sat down alone at roulette, leaving his agreeable French friend and Matilda together in a remote corner of the great room.

Lord Alfred began his combat with a few thalers; but they ran away rapidly, and his reserve followed quickly in their rear. As his pockets grew lighter his spirits grew visibly

worse. Finally, as he watched his last coin tumble into the bank, he turned away with a frown. He could not tell why, but he seemed to feel within him the strange sense that some unseen eye had been intently regarding him. He looked quickly up. Was it a fact or a dream? There, across the green table, those eyes whose deep gaze so curiously answered to his own! What was it? Some ghost come from the grave? Some cheat of his brain made feverish by the play? Or was it really herself,—with those deep eyes of hers and that unforgotten face,—Lucile de Nevers?

With a countenance all transfigured by surprise he moved towards her. She looked at him with searching eyes. Not a word or a blush betrayed the slightest emotion. She seemed to smile through him at something beyond. She answered his questions as if she responded to some voice within herself. She replied without hesitation to each troubled inquiry. She had come back, she said, from her long hiding-place at the source of the sunrise. She had returned to the cities of Europe once again, an exile from her old home in India.

Then pacing onward together in earnest talk, they left the crowd unobserved, but not wholly unnoticed by the Duke and Matilda. Matilda had never seen her husband's new friend. She

had observed by instinct the sudden menacing glance which the Duke had turned towards them when he saw them meet. The gloom on his face grew so deep that she shuddered in spite of herself. To her startled inquiry he made no reply. In his mind at that moment a malignant purpose vaguely shaped itself, such as could alone spring from the chaos of thought into which his whole nature had been shaken.

"So!" he brooded, "they meet again and reweave the old spell! She hangs on his voice and leans on his arm. She neither heeds me nor seeks me out. What if I could show her that I, too, can be loved by her own rival, younger and fairer than herself?"

Unconscious of the serpent eye thus fixed upon them, Lucile and Lord Alfred sauntered by in earnest talk; but a smile now and then seemed to show where their thoughts touched.

Meantime, the Duke had referred to Lucile, with that aggressive false praise which is meant to beget a remonstrance, and then stopped to observe the effect upon Matilda. There is no weapon that slays its victim so surely as praise. Thus a pause had fallen on their conversation, and now they were silent and preoccupied.

There are moments when prolonged silence may be more expressive than all the words ever spoken. This is when the heart instinctively divines what is passing in the heart of another. And what was passing now in Matilda's heart? What brought that sudden flame to her cheek, and what weighed down her head?

All the Duke could discover was that Matilda was troubled, and that his presence seemed to increase that trouble. She, however, broke the silence first. She was plucking the leaves from a pale rose blossom which had fallen from her bosom.

"This poor flower," she said, "seems to be out of place in this hot, lamplit air."

She bent her head low as she spoke, and the Duke watched her caressing the leaves, but remained silent. He knew this would force her to renew their talk at the point where he wished it to begin. Matilda saw the meaning of the significant pause and lifted her head; but her eyes encountered the ardent look of the Duke and dropped back abashed. Then, still conscious of lacking the assurance which she fancied her manners implied to him, she took up again the theme she should just then most have avoided.

"Duke," she said, and she could feel her cheeks burn as she spoke, "you know this—lady, then?"

"Too well," he returned.

"True, you drew her portrait with emotion just now."

"With emotion?" he questioned.

"Yes; you described her as possessed of an unrivalled charm."

"But, madame, you mistook me completely. You yourself surpass this lady as moonlight does lamplight; as youth surpasses its best imitations; as the fresh and pure creature in its native adornment outvies all the charms got by heart at the world's looking-glasses!"

"Yet you said," she gently persisted, but with some trepidation, "that you quite comprehended —a passion so strong as——"

"Exactly," he exclaimed; "but not in a man who had once looked upon you. I cannot conceive or excuse, or——"

"Hush, hush!" she said, with reddening cheeks. "These things differ so between men and women. It may be that the world pardons in you what it visits upon us; or it may be that we women are better than you."

"Who denies it?" said the Duke. "Yet, madame, you make another mistake. The world may judge differently of men and women in regard to its social enchantments, but not as to the one sentiment which is the sole law the moment we love."

"That may be," said Matilda; "but I think I

should be less severe. Although I am so inexperienced, I have learned that the heart cannot always repress the feelings which sway it."

"Yes! yes! that is true, indeed," sighed the Duke, and again there was a momentary silence between them.

At length he began slowly, as though he needed all this time to repress his emotions.

"And yet," he said, "what avails a gift of beauty like yours if it cannot elevate a woman's heart above the reach of doubt and despair, or the pangs of wronged love to which women with less charm are exposed?" Then, with a quick change of tone, as though impelled by resentment, he went on: "It is whispered you took the name you bear because you loved, not in deference to convention. Well, madame, that excited look on the face you know so well throughout all its expressions, that rapturous look, those eloquent features and significant eyes which that pale woman so calmly sees,"—he pointed as he mentioned her to the door where Lucile and Lord Alfred were standing,—"have you ever before seen what you see now in that familiar face? No, it is new! Young, lovely, and loving as you are, are you really loved?"

He looked at her; then paused, and felt that thus far the ground held. The ardor with which he had uttered the question, thus suddenly

spoken, inspired Matilda with a vague sense of fear. She replied, however, with composure:

"It is three years since I became a bride, and I have never had cause to suspect my husband, nor ever stooped, sir, to question his honor. Yet if I should fancy I saw some moments' forgetfulness of me in his looks, I trust I should soon overlook it, for you must have seen that my heart is my husband's."

Her cheek was white as the rose she held in her hand. The last word seemed to die on her lips. Then there was silence again.

A great step had been made by the Duke. There, half drowned by the music, Matilda had listened in spite of herself to a voice she should never have heard at all, and her heart had been troubled by it. The Duke suffered his eye to fathom hers during the short silence, and then resumed:

"Will you allow me to invade your thoughts by disclosing my own? The position in which we seem so strangely placed may excuse my frankness. You say that your heart is your husband's,—that you love him. You think so, of course. I admit that such a love is a merit. But, trust me, there can be no true love without its dread penalty,—jealousy. There, do not start! Until now, thanks to supreme self-control, you have held it down, or have per-

haps never known one of those fiercer pangs which engender deep passion. But if this be the case, is it not most cruel to expose that happy content, to the meeting and receiving of a woman whose place in life is to be your rival in love? You will be unhappy because you will deem your own power less than hers, and I shall not be by your side day by day to tell you, in spite of your noble displeasure, that you are fairer than she is,—as the star is fairer than the diamond."

This appeal both in looks and language increased Matilda's alarm. Still she spoke with what calmness she could command.

"Allow me, sir, to express surprise," she said, "at your zeal in disclosing the depth of my own misery to me."

"The zeal would not startle you, madame," he returned, "if you could read in my heart the peculiar interest which causes it——"

Matilda could no longer hide her terror. She rose from her seat.

"I continue to listen," she said, "but permit me to say, I no longer understand."

"Forgive!" he cried, with a nervous appeal of the hand and a well-feigned confusion of voice. "I forgot that you knew me so slightly. I entreat your leave to speak of myself for one moment, for I think you wrong me."

His voice sunk and tears glistened in his eyes as he lifted them. Matilda involuntarily sat down.

"Beneath an exterior which seems worldly and frivolous," he said, "my heart hides in me a sorrow which draws to me all things that suffer. Nay, do not laugh at such an avowal." His hand went out imploringly. "At a ball, for instance, do I seek for the belle? No, but for some plain, insignificant creature whom all the world is accustomed to neglect or oppress. I console where I can. It is not a brilliant part I admit, but yet it brings me unalloyed joy."

From the tone in which they were spoken, these trite words received an appearance of truth which might have affected a heart much more incredulous than Matilda's.

"Your life, it would seem, then, must be one long act of devotion," she said, demurely.

"Perhaps so," said he, and would have continued his self-revelation; but at this moment, to Matilda's relief, she saw her husband approaching. He had the Comtesse de Nevers on his arm. The Duke turned and adjusted his collar. "Good!" thought he, "the gods fight my battles to-night!"

Lord Alfred presented his wife. The Duke answered Lucile's startled cry of recognition with a bow betokening a distant defiance. With

the grace of kindness which seeks to win kindness, Lucile stepped over beside Matilda, perhaps unconsciously, or resolved not to notice the half-frightened glance which followed her movement. The Duke had relinquished his seat in silence. The moment was undoubtedly awkward for all present; but nevertheless, before long, Lucile's gracious tact was felt by every one, and the reserve seemed to melt unconsciously away. The whole four sauntered, smiling and conversing, through the crowd.

As they approached the door, the Duke, who had fallen behind, was joined by Lucile. She made a little gesture as if to say, Let us feel that the old friendship has survived that one mad and forgotten moment. Then she asked aloud,—

"You remain at Ems, Duke?"

He turned upon her a look of frigid and sullen rebuke. Then with a significant glance at Matilda,—

"Perhaps I have an attraction here. And you?"

Lucile had followed his look and understood his boast.

"I, too," she answered.

He thought he heard her sigh as she left him and resumed her place by Matilda.

Before long they shook hands and parted at the gate of the hotel.

As Lord Alfred and the Duke returned to the Rooms through the thick alley of lindens, suddenly the Duke said,—

"Once more! yet once more!"

"What?" asked Vargrave.

"We meet again the woman for whom we were once to destroy each other. Laugh, *mon cher Alfred!*"

"It is not with laughter that I raise the ghost of that troubled time. Can you, Luvois, recall it with coolness now?"

"Now? Yes, *mon cher.* I am a true *Parisien.* Now the red revolution, next the dance and play. I am now at the play."

"At the play, are you? Then I may presume, Duke, to ask you what I have waited——"

"Ask what you will. *Franc jeu!* My cards are spread out on the table."

"Well, then: you were called to a meeting with Lucile. It was night when you started; and before you returned it was morning. We met. You accosted me with a brow betokening triumph. Your words were, Let us be friends."

"Well?"

"How, then, after that, can you and she meet as acquaintances?"

"What! did she not then resolve your riddle herself to-night with those soft lips of hers?" The Duke feigned a deep surprise.

"We avoided the past to-night," said Lord Alfred. "But the question will be answered at last,—by you, if you will; if not, by her."

"Indeed? But can that question arouse such an interest in you if your passion for her is over?"

"Yes," said Vargrave, emphatically. "Esteem may remain, though love has vanished. Lucile asked me to present her to my wife to-night,—to my wife, understand! I did so. Her hand has clasped Matilda's. We gentlemen owe respect to our name, and to the woman that bears it we owe a twofold respect. Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile reject you? or did you relinquish a prior claim? Simply make a sign that you know Lucile de Nevers is what you would shield your virgin sister from, and Matilda and I leave Ems to-morrow."

The Duke paused and hesitated. He could tell by Lord Alfred's look that he meant exactly what he said. "Suppose they should leave Ems," thought he, "would that suit me? No, that would mar all. Besides, if I do not explain, she herself will,—and then, one should be a gentleman before all else."

"No," he said aloud; "Madame de Nevers had rejected me. I was mad, and threatened my rival's life. She feared for his safety, and I showed you the letter she wrote me. We met,

and my hand was again refused. The glance you mistook was the mask pride lends to humiliation. And yet, it has all proven for the best. By all means stay at Ems."

The Duke turned with a smile and entered the Rooms, which they had now reached. Lord Alfred strode on alone in the darkness. He was bewildered in heart and mind. "And so," he muttered to himself, "it was to rescue me from danger—and I doubted her for this! A light word, a look,—the mistake of a moment! Oh, pardon, pardon Lucile!" Thought and memory rang weary changes through his brain, like a funeral knell, as he stumbled on in the darkness.

When the Duke re-entered the Casino he was smiling. He turned to roulette, played fast and lost heavily. Yet he continued to smile. The night deepened, and he played his last number. Then he went home and slept and smiled in his sleep.

VIII.

It was not long after this that Lord Alfred received a letter from Cousin John, which gave him a great deal of London news, mingled with an abundance of worldly wisdom, and conveyed in no very doubtful terms the warning that if Matilda's fortune still remained in the hands of her uncle McNab, it was in serious danger and

should be withdrawn at once. Startling as this advice was, my lord gave it little heed. It reached him in an unlucky hour. He cast a half-languid glance at his cousin's homilies, read the warning without at all realizing its gravity, and cast the letter aside. In fact, he was behaving just then in a manner to have maddened Job, had that patriarch known him. The more one would have expected him to notice the Duke's attentions to Matilda, the less attention he paid to her himself; but his ardor towards Lucile increased daily. A natural consequence of this was that Matilda began to shrink less from the Duke as her husband drifted farther from her affections. Each day they instinctively felt themselves growing asunder. Alfred passed more and more time at the Rooms and played high, losing more than he was able. He grew feverish and perverse. As the Vargraves and the Duke were staying at the same hotel, it hardly need be said that they all saw too much of each other. The weather was so fine that it brought them together every day in the garden, of course, to listen to the band. Lucile and Matilda were pleased to discover a mutual passion for music. Moreover, the Duke was an excellent tenor, and Lord Alfred would also, at times, when he was not too bored, play Beethoven, or Wagner's new music, and occasionally

some little thing of his own. This and some other causes made the Vargraves' rooms a pleasant enough rendezvous for the entire party.

There was a cool and verdurous arbor in the garden, which offered a gracious retreat from the noonday glare, and here, with some friends of their own little world, the gay company passed many happy hours. The men loved to smoke there, and the women would take their work out and sing or converse till the dew fell. Towards evening there was tea, a luxury due to Matilda, with ices and fruits.

One afternoon, when Matilda presided, with the Duke, a small German prince, an old Russian countess, wicked and witty, and two Austrian colonels for guests, Lord Alfred, who was lounging apart with his last cigarette, saw Lucile pacing to and fro in the cool linden-trees. He went forward and joined her.

"Thank the good stars I have found you!" he exclaimed. "I have much to say to you."

"Yes," with her sweet, serene voice. "And I also was wishing to say something to you." She was paler just then than was her wont. Her voice had a proud sadness in it.

"You are ill?" he asked, anxiously.

"No," she answered, hurriedly. "No, no!"

"You alarm me!"

Her head drooped down.

"If," she murmured, "your thoughts have of late cared to discover what has been passing in mine, my farewell can scarcely alarm you."

"Lucile! Your farewell! You are going!"

"Yes, Lord Alfred."

"But the cause of this unkindness!"

"Unkindness?" she repeated.

"Yes! what else is it?" He was startled into almost rudeness.

"No, no!" she said, softly. "Look into your heart and home. Can you see no reason for this, saving unkindness in me? Look into the eyes of your wife,—those true eyes, too honest to conceal the soul shining through them."

But his only thought was of Lucile's departure. He told her with hurried and incoherent words how he had been defrauded of her and had taken what was left: the one life that could help him to fill the void made by her loss. He pleaded with her, not for love, but for the hallowed friendship that might still subsist between them.

"May we not be friends, the dearest of friends, Lucile?"

She put by his passionate words and calmly reasoned with him. She too had dreamed of it, but it was a dream which always brought a fatal awakening to those who indulged it.

"The dreams of my life are fled," she sighed. "Trust me, Lord Alfred, the best friend you

have is your wife. She is sweet and young. See her now, sitting there! How tenderly fashioned—to love and to be loved!"

He turned sharply away.

"To be sure she is," he said; "but Matilda is a statue, a child. Matilda cannot love—"

Lucile quietly smiled.

"Yesterday, all that you say might have been true. To-day it is false, wholly false."

"How?—what do you mean?" he asked, looking closely into her face.

"I mean that to-day the statue has become endowed with life. The child has grown to a woman: and that woman is jealous."

"What, she!" he cried, in a tone of ironical wonder. "She jealous! Matilda! Of whom pray? Not of me!"

"My Lord, you deceive yourself. She is jealous of no one but you. Trust me, and thank heaven that the passion has appeared in her so lately. Who can say what it might have become if she had known sooner what she has now discovered."

"Explain, explain, madame!" he cried.

"How blind you men are! Can you doubt that a young and fair woman, neglected——"

"Speak plainly," he demanded, as she hesitated. "You mean——what? Do you doubt her fidelity?"

"Certainly not. Listen to me, my friend. Your honor and your wife's are most dear to me. I am certain that you are risking that honor."

He winced and turned pale. She had aimed at his heart, and she saw that she had not missed.

"Stay, Lucile!" he exclaimed. "What in very truth do you mean? Matilda—my wife—do you know?——"

"I know that she is spotless. But I do not know how far your continued neglect might warp her nature. Jealousy in a woman is too often healed by a criminal cure."

"Such thoughts could never have reached Matilda's heart," he faltered.

"Matilda?" said Lucile. "Oh, no! But reflect. There is rarely wanting some voice at a woman's side to conjure them up for her."

"Beware!" he said. "I will search every corner for a clew to your words."

"You mistake them, my lord. I was putting a mere hypothetical case."

She took alarm at the effect her speech had made. He gazed at her with a long, troubled look.

"Woe be to him," he muttered, "woe to him who shall feel such a hope! I swear it should be the last hope of his life!" The clinched hand

and bent brow betokened the inward strife she had aroused.

"You forget," she said, "you menace only yourself. You are the guilty man."

In the silence that followed, poor Lucile could mark in the droop of his head and the heaving of his chest the new germ of life and emotion she had given him. New fears awakened new hopes. In the indifferent husband she could discern that Matilda had gained a new lover. After some moments of silence she extended her hand to him.

"Well?" she said.

"Lucile, I both understand and obey you." He took her soft, quiet hand warmly in his own.

"Thank heaven!" she murmured, turning away.

"But one word more, I beseech you!" he said. "We are parting forever. You have shown me my pathway. Where is your own to be?"

Her calmness was suddenly and strangely broken. She turned from him nervously. "I do not question. I follow where heaven leads. I only know that it must tend far away from all the places where we have met or are likely to meet." A smile sweet as incense which rises from some sacred cup and mixes with music crossed her face.

"Wherever it be, may all gentlest angels

attend you!" he sighed, then kissed her hand with deep emotion.

But, as it happened, that kiss was seen by Matilda with quite other emotions. Her young bosom swelled and her cheeks grew crimson with anger. The Duke had adroitly attracted her look towards it by a faint but significant smile.

IX.

The stars were looking down on the dim garden when Matilda next entered it. She had descended alone from her chamber with aching brow and a vague sadness oppressing her. The house, out of which she had hurried into the open air, half stifled her and seemed ready to sink upon her head. The cool night air, the boundless starlight, and the dark isolation brought her instant relief.

Her husband had that day looked in her face and pressed both her hands. He had reproachfully noticed her recent dejection with a smile of kindest wonder. He, of late so indifferent and listless! Was he startled at last by the change which had taken place in her? Whence had come that look of solicitous fondness? Would he deceive her again by it? Had she been the sport of a transparent illusion! She wandered between the dark trees musing thus, and at last entered the arbor of lilacs where she

had so lately sat face to face with her husband and the pale woman whom she detested. The spot was haunted with the evil remembrances of that day. Farther off the acacias were muttering the story over to themselves. Each word was a wound. They seemed to whisper wild instructions to her, revealing man's last right of reprisal.

An uncertain image began dimly to shape itself forth in the darkness in front of her. It came and went, sending a faint sense of peril through her senses. At last she could vaguely recognize the man to whose image her mind had more and more turned as her heart slowly detached itself from her husband. She saw that it was the vigilant Frenchman.

There was a light sound behind her. She trembled. She felt, without turning, that he was approaching her. Her first instinct was flight; but her foot was as heavy as though it had taken root in the soil. The Duke's voice held her like fear in a dream.

"Ah, lady," he was whispering close to her now, "there are meetings in life which seem ordained by fate. Dare I think by sympathy also? What else can I bless for this good fortune? I felt myself drawn by an irresistible instinct to revisit the memories left here where so lately I had looked in your face. And I find

you—you, yourself—my own dream! Can there be one thought in common between us? If so —I who but a moment ago felt my heart uncompanioned, should indeed be blessed! To receive but a single word from your lips——"

She interrupted him quickly.

"I sought a moment's solitude here, —she began.

"Does solitude live for one only?" he insinuated. "If my heart is the reflex of yours, are we not alone, even though we be two?"

"For that," said Matilda, "it were needful that you should read what is in my heart."

"Forgive me, then, if I look in it and read what lies there."

"Well, Duke! and what do you read, unless it is profound weariness and sadness?"

"No doubt," he said; "but there are laws controlling all facts. The effect always has a cause."

Matilda shrank back. She suddenly found a finger pressed on the still bleeding wound she had that day discovered in her breast.

"You are sad," he continued. The finger pressed with cruel persistence on the wound. "You are sad because the first need of a young and beautiful woman is to love and be loved. You are sad because knowledge is sad!"

"What gave you," she cried, "such strange power?"

"To read your thoughts?" he asked. "Oh, lady, a deep and profound love; whether it be received or rejected, a true and intense love such as you, and you only, could awaken in my breast."

"Hush, hush! I beseech you—for pity!" She snatched the hand he had taken hurriedly from him in an instinctive effort to fly from the place.

"For pity?" he echoed; "and what pity do you owe him? He, the lord of a life that is as fresh as new-fallen dew. The guardian of a matchless woman, and he neglects her—for whom? For a fairer? No! This pure world of ours has no second Matilda. Why, then, be bound by a chain which he himself wantonly breaks? Why repel a love which you have but to stretch forth your hand and take?"

"Oh, hush, hush, sir!" Matilda cried. "Is not Alfred your friend and am I not his wife?"

"And have not I respected his rights till he himself neglected yours as a wife? Do you think I have loved you for only three days? My love may have grown since I first felt the spell of your eyes, but oh, believe me, I loved you before I knew your eyes could weep. I ask no response: I only ask to live in your life and to feel with you when you are in sorrow."

"Leave me, leave me!" she gasped in a voice

thick from emotion. "For pity's sake, Duke, let me go! We should both be to blame if I lingered."

"To blame? Yes, no doubt!" he answered. "If your husband's love had forbidden you to hope. But he signs your release by the hand of another. Who knows when I may see you alone again, to avow the thoughts that are pining for utterance?"

"Duke, Duke! For heaven's sake let me go! It is late. I must return to my lord." She struggled to get away, but he detained her still.

"To your lord?" he repeated, with a lingering reproach. "Do you think he awaits you? At this moment his looks are seeking another face. Other ears are listening to his soft speeches."

"You are mistaken, sir!" A calm, severe, and sad voice spoke close by them. "You are mistaken: she is here!"

The Duke and Matilda started up.

"Lucile!"

Matilda felt herself grow dizzy as she gave a half-stifled scream.

"Ho, oh! Eavesdropping, madame?" cried the Duke. "You were listening, then?"

"Say, rather, that I heard without wishing it."

"Belle Comtesse," said the Duke, with a rage

which betokened that he was baffled, "you know that your place is not here."

"Duke," she answered, calmly, "my place is wherever my duty is. Therefore at this moment my place is here. This morning, lady, my place was beside your husband because I felt that heaven yet spared me time to save him the love of an innocent wife."

She turned to Matilda and lightly laid her soft, quiet hand on her.

"It is the honor which that husband has confided in you I have striven to save to-night. Duc de Luvois, what say you?—is my place not here?" She caught Matilda's hand, wound one arm around her waist, and gently drew her away. The Duke stood confounded. He did not follow them. Before they had reached the house, Lucile could feel her tender burden sink and falter beside her. She knelt down, flung her arms about Matilda, and pressed to her own bosom the poor heart beating against hers.

"In the name of your husband, dear lady," said Lucile, "in your mother's name, be brave! Lift your head. Those blushes are noble. Never trust to the maxim that the husband's fault conceals the wife's. Take refuge in silence. Kneel and pray and hope!"

"Saved, Lucile!" sobbed Matilda, "but to what fate? Tears and prayers, but no hope."

"Hush! Your husband will return to you. Do not doubt it. You were both chilled, not by the absence of love, but through ignorance how love is nourished by itself. Henceforth your heart will be worthy to receive it, since it knows how to grant it."

"What gives you such power over me that I am thus drawn to obey you? What are you, Lucile?"

Matilda sighed and lifted her eyes to the pale face above her. A deep sadness passed suddenly through it.

"The pupil of sorrow," Lucile answered, with a pensive smile.

"Of sorrow?" exclaimed Matilda. "Oh, confide in me! I should find guidance, in all you told me, for my own affliction."

"And I consolation," said Lucile. "Few tears have flowed for me in the days gone by."

Matilda seized her hand and lifted her up, and they entered the house together. They went to Matilda's room. A lamp of white alabaster was suspended from the ceiling. The casement opened into the garden. The pale, cool moonlight streamed in through it. A single nightingale sang in the laurels. The two women, hand in hand, sat down by the open window, unseen save by guardian angels.

X.

When Lord Alfred returned to the salon that night he found it deserted. The lamp burned dimly, as though out of humor at having to light an empty room. He sat alone by the window and endeavored to think. But his mind was disturbed, and for half an hour he brooded bitterly with his head bowed down. Once he rose and opened the door and wistfully looked along the passage towards Matilda's room. But with a sigh he crept back again to his seat. His arms fell loosely at his side. His head drooped to his breast, and his eyes were vaguely fixed on impalpable space.

How long he had thus sat there he could not have told, when, on a sudden, he started up as though he had been shot. A familiar voice was making a great noise in the passage. It was an English voice with a round English accent. The complaint of an injured cab-driver mingled with it, demanding more fare. Then came the hurried steps of no diminutive foot, and the door was flung open. On the threshold Lord Alfred was seized by Cousin John, who greeted him with a frenzy of affectionate hugs. As soon as he could escape Lord Alfred drew his cousin to a chair, and, seating himself opposite, the two scanned each other eagerly. Alfred saw that

John was affected with unwonted emotion. There was certainly something wrong.

"What's the matter? What have you to tell me?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"About this sad business——"

"I? No."

"You received my last letter, Alfred?"

"I think so. If not, what then?"

"You have acted upon it?"

"On what?"

"The advice I gave you——"

"Advice?—let me see: you are always giving me advice, Jack. About Parliament, wasn't it?"

"Hang Parliament! No. The bank, the bank, Alfred!"

"What bank?"

"Heavens! I know you are careless, but surely you have not forgotten—or neglected—I warned you of the danger. You have at least withdrawn those deposits?"

"No; I meant to have written to-day. But I'll write to-morrow, positively."

"To-morrow? But, Alfred, it is too late."

"Mercy save us!" cried Lord Alfred, waking up to the gravity of the situation. "You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do."

"What! Sir Ridley?"

"Smashed, broken, blown up, bolted too!"

"But his own niece? In heaven's name, Jack——"

"Oh, I told you the old hypocrite would."

"But surely you can't mean we are ruined?" Lord Alfred was transfixed with dismay and astonishment.

"Sit down," said Cousin Jack, and he proceeded in a business-like way to reveal the situation in detail: "About a fortnight ago there was a report about town that made me most apprehensive. I wrote at once and warned you. My forebodings were confirmed about five days ago by a run on the bank. I drove down to the city at once. The door was closed. The bank had stopped payment at four o'clock. Next morning the failure was known to be a fraud. A warrant was out for MacNab, but he had fled to the continent. I endeavored to get some information, but as yet have learned nothing, and so I joined you as quickly as I could with the news."

He stopped here, aghast at the change in Lord Alfred, who had grown livid.

"Courage, courage!" he said, "bear the blow like a man."

"I bear it," said Alfred. "But, Matilda, the blow is aimed at her." His head seemed forced down by some unseen weight.

"Matilda?" said Cousin Jack. "Pooh, pooh! I half think I know the girl better than you do yourself. She has courage enough and to spare. She cares less than most women for luxury and nonsense."

"But the fault was mine," persisted Lord Alfred.

"Well, let it be yours to repair it, then. If you did not avert it, help to soften it."

"I might have averted it," said his lordship, ruefully.

"Perhaps so," said Cousin John; "but now there is no use of considering that. You must stir yourself for her sake; something may yet be saved from the wreck."

"Oh, Jack, I have been a brute, idiot!" wailed Lord Alfred. "I have sinned, and against her. I have been heedless, blind, and now I see all things in a flash."

He bowed his head low on the table as if to shut out a hated vision. The great tears rolled in silence down his face. Cousin John rose without speaking and paced up and down the long room, much afflicted in his own cordial heart for Matilda.

At last he bent over his cousin, whose sobs

betokened the pain he was enduring, and suddenly laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Where is she?" he asked.

Lord Alfred lifted a face disfigured with tears and gazed vacantly at him.

"Where is she?" repeated his cousin.

Lord Alfred motioned to the door.

"There, I think," he said.

Cousin John relapsed into his own cogitations. Then, at last, a time-piece struck twelve, which drew his attention to the dial. He quietly put his arm around Lord Alfred's neck and drew his hands down from his face.

"It is time that she should know what has happened," was all he said.

Lord Alfred started at once to his feet. Wan and distorted as his face was, he looked more than ever like a man. He was strong for once in his own weakness, uplifted and inspired with a manly resolution.

"I will go alone, Jack. Trust it to me," he said.

"I do, Alfred. But it is late, remember. If she is asleep you will not wake her?"

"No, no! The news will keep—poor infant!—only too surely. If she is asleep, I will let her rest till to-morrow."

He opened the door and passed out. Cousin John watched him wistfully and left him to

seek her alone. When Lord Alfred knocked at her door, his heart beat so loud he could not have heard a reply from within. He repeated the knock. Then tried the handle. The door opened, and he entered undiscovered.

The pale lamp shed an indistinct light about the chamber, through which, by slow degrees, he could see Matilda kneeling at her bedside. She was so deeply wrapt in prayer that she did not know of her husband's presence. There seemed to be a faint, unearthly effulgence mingled with the moonlight and lamplight, as if to denote the presence there of something angelic and pure.

She had put off her dress, and looked, in his eyes, like a young soul escaped from its earthly garb. Her neck and shoulders were bare, and her soft golden locks rippled down over them. Her simple white bodice was undone, and all the curves of her slender waist were unconfined. Her beauty went trembling through him as the light through rippling water. His heart was bowed down. Scarcely knowing what he did, he silently knelt and prayed beside her.

Then, for the first time, she knew that he was near her. A blush rose swiftly upon her pale cheek where the tears yet sparkled. She shrank back instinctively; but he caught her, and, putting his arm round her waist, pressed

one long kiss on her brow. Then her fear was gone. Her head fell upon his breast, and she hung upon him locked in a clinging embrace, as though she feared, if her clasp were relaxed, he might part from her again. Her smooth shoulders, convulsed by sob after sob, and her pulsing bosom pressed against his, told of the tumult within her heart.

"Oh, Alfred, Alfred! forgive me!" she sobbed.

"Forgive you, my poor child! But I never blamed you, and I have not a single reproach for you now." He gently unwound himself from her arms and forced her down beside him. They sat under the canopy of their couch.

"Matilda," he said, softly, "when a proud man has at length found out that he is but a fool in his wisdom, to whom should he first own his weakness? Should it not be to his wife?"

"Yes," murmured Matilda.

"Then this chamber, dear, is a confessional, and you are my confessor."

"I?" she faltered, timidly raising her head.

"Yes! But first answer one question: When a woman feels that she is not alone, that another halves his life with her for weal or woe, will she bear any better what life may take away from her? When calamities befall her, will she feel that, though they darken the home, they brighten the heart?"

She turned her eyes on him like a soft rainy sky, and smiled through her fresh tears, trustfully and tenderly.

"That woman," she murmured, "were thrice blessed."

"Courage then, true heart!" he said, and gathered her closely to him. "The refuge of these wide-open arms can never be closed to you again. This room is an asylum for us both, for when I crossed the threshold I left there a sudden and heavy calamity. Henceforth I fear we must face it daily, but here it cannot enter."

She started: "Calamity, Alfred, to you?"

"To both, my poor child; but I trust it brings with it the courage to endure it." Then he gravely told her how, through all their troubles, an angel had been near ready to rescue and warn them. How the smile which Matilda had seen with suspicion and the presence she had daily resented were those of one whom they would some day learn to remember in their prayers. But she was gone now from their sight forever.

"Here, alone," he cried, "I seek your forgiveness, dear, and open my heart to you. Your fortune is lost. But I have found a greater prize, the heart of my wife!"

She sprang from her seat with a beaming face

and flung her arms about him, while her head fell upon his shoulder. She sobbed there a moment, but not with sorrow, nor even the sense of loss. She was oblivious of all save her own love. But his words rushed back upon her as she lay there: "The fortune lost!"

"Lost?" she said, at last. "Tell me! See, Alfred, I need a fuller sense of affliction to sober this rapture."

"Poor innocent child!" He kissed her fair brow and smiled mournfully as he told her all he had heard; assuring her of a loyalty which should inspire him to valiant work in her service.

"And I, too," she murmured, "am no longer an infant. I have suffered since those old days. With the faith I pledged as a wife now goes the heart I have learned to feel as a woman. For I love you, my husband."

She hid her head on his breast, as if to emphasize the words; and he embraced her with a new fervor and poured a torrent of endearing words into her ear.

XI.

When Lucile left Matilda she sat a long time in her chamber among the signs which betokened her departure back to her old vacant life. Her heart faltered within her. She was unable to

sleep or to free herself from comfortless reveries, so she rose and went down again into the garden. The air of dawn, which was just at hand, touched her feverish brow with a strange sensation. The land lay in darkness all about her. There was no sound saving of the river and of the crickets that sing all night.

She stood still. Emotions long pent up in her breast began to stir anew. Then there came a dull sound, and a ghostly hand touched her. She felt herself fixed by a pair of hot and hollow eyes. It was the Frenchman. As he stood before her his eyes seemed to scorch out the darkness between them. He looked like a shade sent forth to oppress the soul of some monk in a wilderness.

"At last, then—and alone!" he muttered. "At last you and I, Lucile de Nevers, have met!" She was about to speak, but he prevented her. "Hush! I know the tryst was not meant for me! But never mind, it is mine, and whatever motive has brought you here, you shall stay until we have spoken. My hour has come, and you are at my mercy. You shall listen to me!"

She appeared to awaken with a start.

"Continue," she said: "I am listening."

He did not reply for a moment. She saw that his face was disturbed by some new thought. He continued to pace to and fro with closely-

folded arms. He had the restless stride of a panther as he paced in narrowing circles around her. At last he stood still and searched her face with one long look.

"Lucile, can you dare to look into my face? Is the sight so repugnant? Well, then, can you identify one word of your writing there? Your own name is scrawled in it, and it defaces the soul beneath."

There was something so wild and terrible in his eyes that she was alarmed. He saw it and smiled, then turned away and resumed the short, restless stride, as if searching vainly for the point of some purpose within him.

"Lucile, you shudder when you look into my face: do you feel no reproach when you look into your own heart?"

"No," she said, calmly; "I do not deserve your rebuke."

"No," he muttered; "gentle Justice first bids life not to hope, then says to despair, Do not act. We are wrecked creatures, you and I, only able to injure each other, and fall, sooner or later, into the void we have ourselves prepared. Woman, woman, what have you done with my youth? Give me back again the young heart I gave you."

"In vain," she murmured, with downcast eyes.

"Yes, yes!" he went on wildly, "I was not always thus. I have not forgot, madame, what I once was!"

"And you charge me with wrecking your life! Alas, Duc de Luvois, had I yielded to your entreaties and defrauded my own heart by marrying you, should I not more deeply have wronged you?"

"Wronged!" he cried. "Is it so, then, that you could never have loved me?"

"Duke!" she interposed to soften the question.

"Never?" he persisted, breaking into a fierce laugh. "But you knew that I loved you. You led me on to lay all the cruel power in that cold face of yours to my heart. Was that well? And yet I would not vent my hatred upon you. It was he! that man who tramples on me in his triumph. He has cast his shadow between me and the sun. My hate will yet find him out!"

She murmured some words of regret, then said a final farewell and turned coldly away.

"Stay, Lucile!" he cried. "I am mad, brutalized, blind with pain! I did not mean what I uttered. Forgive me! I—have wronged you,—I—I—forgive, forgive me!"

"I feel nothing but sadness, sadness to my soul, far too deep for resentment," she said, in a low voice.

"But stand as you are one moment," he pleaded. "I think if I could look awhile on your face the old innocent days would come back to me, and this scorching heart might free itself in hot tears. I lied, Lucile; stay a moment. And yet if you had helped me to bear what you made me suffer——"

"Could I have helped you?" she murmured. "But what can I say that your life will respond to?"

"My life? No," he sighed. "My life has brought forth nothing but evil. The love I gave you was all I had. It perished, and all else perished with it. By the law of fate I am what I am."

She was silent for awhile, then answered gravely,—

"I am only a woman and cannot judge fully of this matter. But there is a purpose in pain, for otherwise it were devilish. A large hope should be yours, Eugene. What better proves that there's life still in a heart than that it bleeds? Pain will burn itself out if sin ceases to supply it with fuel. There is hope and love in yonder dawn. Let hate and despondency die with the night!"

The sound of her measured and sympathetic words seemed to restore the forces of his thought. A fancy passed through his mind that

the woman he once loved was dead, and that this was her spirit which stood by him in the light of dawn. He besought the soul of Lucile to pray for his soul.

"We are parting," he said. "All is over between us. It was the long-hoarded pain that rushed from me. I was unjust, Lucile; forgive me! I was maddened, delirious! I saw you return to him—not to me; and my heart burnt with vengeance. Are we, then, never to meet again? Ah, who knows or heeds where the exile from Paris flies?"

Once more her voice fell soothingly on his senses:

"Our paths part henceforth, Eugene. I cannot say that we shall never meet again, for I do not know. But we can never meet again as we met of old. This alone I will promise: that if in the conflict before you you ever falter and need my presence to rescue or support you, in that hour of need, depend upon it, I shall be at your side. Then we shall meet again soul to soul."

Her voice ceased, and he lifted his eyes to see her face; but she was gone.

XII.

A YOUNG English officer who had fallen sword in hand on the field of Inkerman had been

carried to the rear, still breathing, but wounded almost to death. Through long days and nights he lay in his tent, dark and hopeless, for in his young heart there was a wound rankling as pitilessly as the desperate hurt in his side. One night as he lay there half delirious he heard the wind wailing without and swaying the rain-drenched tent curtain to and fro; then the curtain was lifted suddenly, but not by the wind, and a pale woman entered. The sufferer could see her form floating towards him in the dim lamplight. She paused at last by his bedside and laid her white hand on his brow. A light finger softly pressed the sore wounds. The hot dressing was slipped away from them. A comforting tranquillity stole through him. He could see two intense, tender eyes bending over him from beneath a hood of rough gray serge. Surely, he thought, this is Death's angel. But a soft voice said, "Sleep!"

He fell asleep at the command and wakened only at dawn. The vision was still there. It had not moved from his side; but the aspect of all things about him had been silently beautified.

"Say what you are, blessed dream of a ministering spirit," he sighed.

A whisper came from the silence:

"I am the Sœur Seraphine, young soldier, a

poor Sister of Charity. Inquire no further, but sleep again."

Once more he obeyed her and slept till dawn. She was by his side when he awoke, and he asked her anew where she had come from and who she was.

Bending down to smooth the hot pillow, she whispered,—

"Your life is precious to me, for I know your mother and your father."

"Can it be so? My dearest father and mother,—you know them?"

She bowed silently, half averting her face.

Brokenly and timidly he asked,—

"Do they know I am—here?"

"Hush!"

She smiled and drew two letters, which bore familiar writing, from her bosom.

He burst into tears.

"My poor mother—my father! They know the worst, then!"

"No!" she said, smiling; "they know you are living and that I am watching beside you."

Then again she soothed him to sleep, and he lost his woes in the peace of dreams.

Day followed day in this wise until the lusty young frame began to knit again and the boy was nearly well. But there was still a feebleness lurking in his system which looked out of

his hollow eyes and was apparent in his pinched cheeks and the languor of his thin pale fingers.

"I have healed the wounds of the body," she said one day. "But what do you hide in that still-open wound of the heart? Will you trust no hand near it?"

He winced like one who is suddenly touched on a nerve.

"What?" he moaned. "Is my heart so bare, then?"

"No, young soldier," she said, reassuringly, "but these eyes are too familiar with sorrow not to know her features. Trust me!" drawing his two feeble hands gently into her own. "Trust me! I am not so dead to the world but that I can recall enough of its sorrows to grieve for us both. Perhaps if I know the cause of your unhappiness I could heal it. Tell me, then; trust in me!"

He was weeping when she paused. There was small need to add entreaty to those gentle accents. Without resistance they drew the brief tale of an early sorrow to his trembling lips.

"A few years ago," he said, "a young girl, the niece of a French noble, was brought from an ancient Norman pile by the northern seas to live with an old dame of her race in the Faubourg Saint Germain. From babyhood the girl had been without father and mother, but an

uncle had supplied their place in her heart. She had grown up at his side and under his roof-tree from childhood to girlhood. She seemed to be the sole human creature for whom he had a regard. No smile but hers could win a response from his dark and threatening face. But after a few tranquil years in the old chateau a letter arrived which suddenly called him away, and when he returned he brought with him a tall and ancient kinswoman, to whom he confided the orphan. He then left them alone in the far-away house, and the girl saw no more of him for years. But it was at his command that she had been taken to Paris, as he desired her, he said, to see the world. And it was in Paris that I met her. The old miracle of love at first sight needs no explanation. I was graciously bidden to be an habitual guest at the house, and the old lady seemed pleased to observe that my love was returned by Constance. She wrote to her cousin of my father, and of my deference to her; of my love for Constance and of hers for me. At length came a brief and stern answer which much astonished the aged lady: "Let Constance leave Paris with you on the day you receive this. She may remain at her convent until I return. If she wishes to see me again she will never marry that man. You have broken faith with me. Fare-

well!" There was no appeal from such a decree. The dream was over. Constance went away with her old guardian, and though she never murmured she grew paler day by day and was visibly drooping. It was then that I too sought death."

Thus his tale ended. As he had told it, in faltering words, the night-wind had blown in gusts about the tent door. When he was done he sank back exhausted and fell into a feverish slumber. She sat for a long while in deep thought. The sweet smile which was wont to linger in her face had fled away and a great sadness was there instead. The tears began to fall from her eyes, but she was not wholly joyless.

"Here, at least, I have not failed," she murmured, as she drew two letters from her bosom.

In one, a mother's heart, wild with alarm for her son, breathed forth a despairing plaint:

"The pledge of love owed to you, Lucile; the hope of a home saved by you, of a heart which has never ceased to bless and to pray for you since that happy time,—in the name of all these, save my son!"

Then, from Lord Alfred, followed a few blotted and heart-broken pages, in which he spoke of his love for the boy and his grief that the match could never come to pass. He also appealed to her to save his son, and blessed her for her loving care of him.

"Ah," murmured the Sœur Seraphine again, "there at least I have not failed. My part is done; my mission accomplished." She knelt down and prayed. When dawn broke into the tent she rose from the bedside and passed out.

Meanwhile, in his well-ordered tent, surrounded by his aides and going over his daily reports, sat a French general, bronzed by the sun and seared by the sands of Algeria. He had strangely and rapidly risen from the wars of the wild Kabylee to be the idol of the younger French chivalry. He had entered the army late in life, after discarding his Bourbonite allegiance, and had risen partly from a singular aptitude for the desert warfare of ambush and stratagem and partly from chance,—partly, too, from a name and position which his countrymen were proud to put forward.

He was, at the moment, bending over some plan for hospital service, and the officer standing behind him referred to the loving offices of the Sisters of Charity; one of whom in particular, he declared, was known through the camp as an angel of grace.

"Truly, I have heard much of her," said the general, "and we already owe her the lives of many of our bravest. You allude to—how do they call her?—the Sœur Seraphine; is it not so? On my word I have very much wished to

see her. Find her, and, if possible, let her come to me. We shall, I think, aid each other."

"*Oui, mon Général:* I hear she has lately been attending a sick man in the Second Division of our allies; they say he is a relation of hers."

"A relation?" asked the general, absently.

"So it is said."

"Do you know the name?"

"*Non, mon Général.*"

As they spoke a murmur arose around the tent door, and a voice said,—

"A Sister of Charity craves the grace of a brief private interview with the general. Will he speak with her?"

"Bid her declare her mission," he said.

"She will not do so. She desires to be seen and heard personally."

"Her name, then."

"The Sœur Seraphine."

"Clear the tent. She may enter."

The general heard a light footfall behind him.

"Sit down, Holy Sister," he said; "your worth is well known to the hearts of all our men. I owe you some thanks for your services. Now, then, your mission?"

The nun was silent. He eyed her more keenly. His aspect grew troubled. A change darkened over his features.

"Strange," he muttered, "that the face should remind me of her! Psha! it is only a dream!" Then he repeated aloud: "Sit down, Sister, and state the cause of your visit."

"The cause?" she vaguely said. She made a movement less towards him than away from herself. Her head drooped and she folded her hands on her bosom. They were long, fatigued, and mournful hands. Not a stray hair escaped from the white bands, which were scarcely paler than the face bound within them. She fixed her eyes on him, and he felt a strange awe creep over his senses.

"Eugene de Luvois," she said in measured words, "the cause of my visit is a promise which remains unfulfilled. I come to fulfil it."

He sprang from his seat, pressing his hand over his face as if in doubt, and stepped toward her. He laid one heavy hand on her shoulder and searched her face with a long, troubled look. Then he staggered backward.

"Lucile!" he cried. "And we meet again thus, and here?"

"Soul to soul, Eugene, as I pledged you we should one day do. I would speak now to your soul. May I do so?"

He said only, "Speak to me!"

"I come from the bedside of a man who is

dying," she said. "Even while we are talking here his life ebbs away."

"Quick, then!" he cried; "do you want medicine or aid, or what?"

"Medicine for the mind,—yes. It is the heart which needs aid in this case. You, and you only, can save his life. Now, will you save it?"

"But what man? How? Where?"

She told him all in a few brief and vivid words, then threw the whole pity of her heart into a plea for the young soldier's love.

As she proceeded his face grew more and more inflamed, and at last the storm which had been gathering within broke into grief and rage.

"Hold!" he cried. "It is for his sake, then, you are here,—for him you have deigned to think again of my long-forgotten existence!"

"Eugene," she said, soothingly.

"Fool that I was!" he went on. "But, be it so. There's a sort of slow justice in it. At last I can return him his own word,—Never!"

"When we parted," she said, "I urged you to put forth the power which I knew was yours. I foresaw you would conquer, and you have conquered much that is noble. But I saw, as well, that there was one foe whom you might fail to subdue, and that was yourself. You remember that I promised, if I saw my

champion falter, I would be promptly at his side. The moment has come now, for you falter. I plead for yourself and one other: for your own nobler nature and for Constance!"

"Constance!" he exclaimed. "Ay, she entered my lonely life when its sun had long been set. I have only that one sole light in the midst of much darkness."

"But can you feel assured of the life you cherish so?"

"Why not?" he asked, startled.

"If the boy should die?" she said.

He was pacing the tent with long strides and muttering low to himself,—

"These young things lie safe in our hearts while their wings are growing, and when they are strong, they break the nest and, it is farewell, and they fly away."

The nun laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Remember," she said, "life fleets away while we talk thus. Oh, Eugene, let this day behold your final victory!"

"If Constance weds the son of this man," he said, solemnly, "she is lost forever to my life!"

"But do not think of the son of the man whom you unjustly hate; think only of this young human creature who appeals to you from the edge of the grave!"

She pleaded with him with all the intensity of her nature, and he seemed moved at last; but still he put the cup from him, and bowed his face in his hands. Then, overtaken by a new impulse, he sprang up from his seat and brushed past her, bitterly crying,—

"No! Constance to marry a Vargrave! I cannot consent!"

The Sœur Seraphine rose to her full height. The low tent seemed dwarfed by her stature, and a silent sadness poured from her imperial eyes upon him. He felt himself shrink under the compulsion of her regard.

"Eugene de Luvois," she said, "but for you I might have been now, not this wandering nun, but a wife pleading, not for another's child, but blessing one of my own,—my own and his—whom I once loved!"

He made a gesture of reproach, but she put forth a commanding hand, and continued:

"Hush! that which is done I do not regret. I breathe no reproaches. What God sends is best. This only I say: You have not the right to think yourself the wronged!"

"Have I, then, wronged you, Lucile!" he cried, painfully.

"No, not me," she answered, "but man. The lone nun has no claim on earth. She has passed from earth's wrongs and reparations. But the

dead woman, Lucile, whose grave is in me, demands reparation to man and God."

"Hush!" he moaned. "I obey the Sœur Seraphine. Then, Lucile, let this pay the debt due to the grave. Now lead on; I follow you to the son of Lord Alfred Vargrave—and then"—as he spoke he lifted the tent door and pointed across to the dark bastions and the city beneath —"then, there, and *valete et plaudite*, as soon as may be!"

The damp and sickly day was declining, and the English camp shone in a ghostly glare. Alone in his dim tent, with eyes fixed upon the departing light, the sick boy was sitting on his low bed, full of weary thoughts. Suddenly a shadow fell between his eyes and the sun. It was the pale Sister once more. But there was some one else by her side. How often through the glory of battle had he watched with longing looks that dim plume which now shook there in his tent door! How that stern face had haunted his dreams! Through what fear and doubt he had yearned to be a hero like this famous warrior! And now—could he speak out his heart face to face with him before he died! He sprang up, and the blood sprang up to his throat and overthrew him. He reeled back; a dim haze filled his eyes, and a din like roaring waters was in his ears, through which he could

faintly hear the nun say, as she pointed to him, "Behold!" Then the plume seemed to wave like a flame and fade into the darkness which put out the world.

The general bent at his side.

"Ah, the smooth brow, the fair Vargrave face, and those eyes, all his mother's. The old things once again. Do not get up," he said, as the boy attempted to do so; "you are suffering."

"Sir, I am dying," was the reply.

"Not so young!" said the Duke.

"So young? Yes, and yet I have tangled other lives in the warp and woof of mine. Yes, Duke, very young, and I did not know you, though I have done you a wrong which it is too late to repair. I loved your niece,—loved?—why, I *love* her. I seemed born to love her. There was no voice raised in warning of the coming curse, and the blow fell upon us both. This is why I implore your pardon for the great injury done to her, and through her to you, Heaven knows how unwittingly!"

"Ah, young soldier, but suppose I came to seek, not to grant, pardon?"

"Of whom?" said the boy.

"Of yourself."

"Duke, I bear to the tomb not a single resentment. There is nothing for me to forgive.

Every act of your great life starts forward to confirm my heart in its faith in yours. I believe in Constance as she does in you. There is grief wherever we turn in this world, and yet there sits God, calmly in heaven above! Do we trust one whit less in his justice?"

"Enough!" said the Duke. "At last hear the truth. Your father and I were foes, but why it matters not. My heart buried slain love in hatred. But the present shall acquit the past. In the name of my niece, whom I give you as a hostage, are you great enough to forgive me and live?"

A tumultuous joy arose in the young soldier's face. He had risen to answer the Duke, but strength failed him. A strange, happy feebleness trembled through him. With a cry of rapture he sank on the nun's breast.

"Yes, boy, thank this guardian angel," the Duke said. "I, and you also, owe her all. Live for her sake, and be true to your young life's promise!"

"I will live, Duke," he said. "I must live to make my life answer your claim. Joy never kills!" His head sank back upon the nun's breast. She saw his lip quiver, and motioned the Duke to withdraw. He eyed them with a wistful look, then turned and passed out of the tent.

As he stood outside watching the lurid sunset and deeply affected by what he had done and seen, Lucile left the tent and came silently to his side.

"Sœur Seraphine," he said, "are you happy?"

"Eugene," she answered, "what can be happier than not to have hoped in vain? And you?"

"Yes," was all he said.

"You do not repent?"

"No."

"Thank Heaven!" she murmured.

He looked musingly at the sunset and sighed as though from his very heart.

"Blessed are they, among whom I am not," he said, "whose unclouded morning predicts a pure evening."

"But the final question will be," she answered, "not, How did the soul pass through its trials? but, What is its state at the last?"

"May it be so!" he sighed. "There, the sun drops!" and while he spoke all the purple and gold in the west had turned ashen, save one fading strip of light.

"*Nunc dimittis!*" she said. "Again we two part, each to work out Heaven's will: you, I trust, in the world's ample witness, and I in secret and silence. We will meet at one gate when all is over." She turned with a sad smile and passed out into the twilight.

THE SPANISH GYPSY.

GEORGE ELIOT.

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I.

Five good souls were grouped in the whitened court of the Moorish tavern, expecting to see the Duke and his soldiers pass by. The trellised vines were purpling above their heads as they sat in the shade, noting through the open door the throngs that had come abroad to see the procession. There was Mine Host, with a well-arched nose, soft eyes, and fat hands, with which he caressed Seneca the mastiff, leaning on his knee. There was Blasco, prosperous silversmith from Aragon; Juan, a spare man who held a lute and chattered like a magpie; Roldan, the juggler, all spangles and rosettes and little else; and, lastly, there was Roldan's son, whom his dead wife, the Spanish dancer, had left him. He too had his spangles and large rosettes, to hide his crippled left foot, which was rounded like a hoof. But beside these, and by no means to be omitted, there was Annibal, the monkey, who performed tricks and carried

round the hat: a misanthrope very grim and gray to look upon.

A braided matting was stretched above their heads, partly rolled back to let in the sky and partly protective of the grapes. A fountain played in the court, where birds occasionally alighted and drank; and on the stone floor lay the heaped-up goods of Roldan, the juggler: carpet and hoops and a violin and tambourine, among which was perched Annibal, with severe brows and a look of hearty disgust.

"Hark, there's the trumpet!" cried Juan, near the door-way. "Now the clattering hoofs, and, there comes the banner!"

Mine Host joined Juan, and leaned far out of the door.

"The Duke has finished reconnoitring, then," he said. "We shall hear news now. They say he means a sally against El Zagal's Moors as they push home with their booty. Then, when he is joined by the other nobles, he will lay siege to Guadix. Juan, you're a bird who nest in the castle: what say you?"

"Nothing!" replied Juan, with eyes on the street. "But here comes the Duke. What feeble shouts they give him! Some look sour enough, too!"

"Spain does not hold a more gallant gentleman," cried Mine Host. "Long live Duke Silva!

What a rare smile he has,—it's so seldom seen!" Then turning to Blasco: "You are a stranger, sir, and cannot know how our Duke's nature suits his princely frame."

"No," said the silversmith, "but I marked his spurs,—very cunningly chased. Your Duke surely sat well: a true hidalgo; but you seem to say the people are slack in love towards him."

"They've nothing against him," said Mine Host, reassuringly, "but certain winds make men's temper bad. There's a wind just now that blows right from Seville——"

"Ay, you mean the wind—that's rather hot——"

"With fagots," explained Mine Host.

"A wind that does not suit with our townsmen's blood," interposed Juan.

"We of Saragossa do not like this new tax, I warrant you," said Blasco: "but," with a cautious look about him, "perhaps I speak too bluntly. As for Holy Church, no man believes more."

"Nay, sir," said Mine Host. "Good Master Roldan here is no delator."

"You speak to me, sirs?" said Roldan, starting from a revery. "I perform to-night in the Plaça Santiago. Twenty tricks, all different. I dance, too. The boy sings like a bird. I crave your patronage."

"Faith, you shall have it, sir," put in Blasco. "I take a little freedom in travelling. You did not mark what I said just now?"

"I? No. I pray your pardon. My knee twinges and makes it hard for me to listen. You were saying——?"

"Nay, it was nothing," answered Blasco. Then aside to the host he whispered, "Is it his deepness?"

"No, he's deep in nothing but poverty," was the answer in Blasco's ear.

"Good! I speak out my mind about the penalties, but I'm against assassination for all that. You know my meaning,—Master Arbués, the grand inquisitor in Aragon. I knew nothing, paid nothing towards the deed. But I was there at prayers in the church. How could I help it? I——"

"Looked another way," put in Juan.

"Why, at my beads," continued Blasco. "It was after midnight. I saw the martyr kneel. I never liked his looks alive,—he was no martyr then. I looked away and told my beads, and across the chanting there came a sound as if a tree had crashed above the roar of a torrent. He had a good iron suit beneath the innocent serge,—that made the sound. Then came shrieks and rushing feet, and in the midst Master Arbués lay felled like an ox. It was wicked

butchery. Some honest men thought it would scare the Inquisition from Aragon. But it was money thrown away,—I should say, crime."

"That was a pity now," said Mine Host. "There's a high-born Dominican monk here within the city walls they might have made the mistake to kill."

"What! is he——?" asked Blasco.

"Yes; a Master Arbués of finer quality. He's the Prior here; uncle to our Duke."

"He will want plate, then; a holy pillar or a crucifix," said Blasco, keen for trade. "But did you say he was like Arbués?"

"As a black eagle is like a raven," put in Juan.

Mine Host leaned back in his chair and delivered an opinion that was meant to be final:

"Our Father Isidor is—a living saint," he said. "Some think a living saint is a heresy, for, according to the Church, saints should be dead. It would be a sin to detain his soul from bliss, say I, and I've never grudged him the shortest journey to the seventh heaven."

"Piously said," cried Blasco. "Look you, I'm dutiful, always obey the Church—when there's no help for it,—and Pope, Bishop, and all customers order alike."

Blasco was a little startled by hearing, after this bit of treason, a resonant step on the stones

and seeing the bronzed face of a soldier come through the door-way.

"At your service, sirs," he said, with an angular gesture, as he came into their midst.

"Ha, Captain Lopez!" called out Juan. "You have a face as full charged with tidings as a herald's. What's the latest news from the wars?"

"Such news as is most bitter to my tongue," answered the soldier, as he took the seat offered by the landlord and lifted a fresh-filled cup to his lips.

"Then spit it forth," retorted Juan, thrumming his lute carelessly.

"The news is bad," said he of the sword and spurs. "We are to make no sally; but sit here and wait whatever the Moor pleases to do."

"Some townsmen will be glad of that," said Mine Host.

"Glad, will they be? Well, so am not I," exclaimed the Captain. "No Spanish soldier's glad of clean blood. But the Duke has decided to wait a siege instead of laying one. Meantime, he will marry."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the landlord, shaking his fat sides. "Your speech is like an hour-glass. Turn it down and it will stand just as well. Why not say the Duke means to wed, therefore he will wait a siege? But what do Don Diego and the Prior say to this?"

"Oh, there are sayings abroad as thick as

overturned nuts. Some say letters from Rome changed the Duke's plans, some from Malaga, some say it is a pretext. Blas said that. Last week he said——"

"I'd as lief be pelted with a pea forever in the same spot as hear such a repetition of saids," interrupted the impatient Juan.

"Santiago! but you are hard to please, Juan," exclaimed the Captain. "But I do not speak for my own delight. I can be silent."

"Nay, speak on, sir," urged Blasco. "I like your matter well. I deal in plate, and the wedding therefore touches me closely. Who is the bride?"

"Her name is Fedalma," went on Lopez with an injured air; "the Duchess Diana, the Duke's mother, who died last year, gave it to her. They say the Duke stoops in marrying her. That's the simple truth. Father Marcos says she will not confess and avoids holy water; says her blood is infidel; says the Duke's wedding her is a union of light with darkness."

"Tush!" from Juan, with a squirm of the body and an emphatic stamp of foot on the stone floor. He had been touching his lute as the soldier spoke, first in a soft arpeggio, then louder and louder, till, as he delivered himself of this exclamation, he struck a chord as sudden as a whip-crack right at Lopez's ear. Mine

Host and Blasco smiled broadly, the mastiff barked, Roldan looked suddenly up, and Annibal, cautiously neutral, looked down. The boy lifted longing and listening eyes, like those of an exiled spirit waiting for voices from the distant land it hailed from. Lopez was the only one unmoved. He bore the assault like a rock.

"If that's a hint," he said to Juan, "the company should ask you for a song, I suppose?"

"Ay, sing, Juan," put in Mine Host; "something brand-new."

Juan preluded with a score of desultory notes, then sang, in a voice of fine masculine vibrations, a chanson about the priest's scandal of Fedalma. As he rolled forth the melody there came a constellation of black eyes all about the court. Fat Lola leaned on the balcony; thin Alda leaned over her nodding baby; little Pepe strained his two black beads of eyes; while Lorenzo's wife stood patting his head and holding in her arm the senior baby. These were all on the balcony; but at the door there was a knot of lank boys and men with lazy shoulders who had lounged dreamily within hearing of the music.

When Juan had finished he was urged by Mine Host and the rest to give another ballad, and, nothing loath, sang again. After he had done, Roldan rose quietly from his seat.

"Sirs," he said, "you will hear my boy, I hope? It is very hard when gentles sing for nothing to the whole town. How can a poor man live? We must go to the Plaça now; but who'll give us pence when he can hear hidalgos for nothing?"

"I'll sing no more, friend; be pacified," said Juan. "You go and we'll follow."

The little group went slowly out, escorted by all the idlers, Annibal, on his master's shoulder, looking gloomier than ever.

"Shall we go? All of us together?" said Lorenzo, the host, gayly.

"Well, not I. I'll be there anon," answered the Captain. "There's a strict command that all our Gypsy prisoners shall be lodged in the fort to-night. We shall meet again."

He went clanking forth, and Blasco called after him, "Go, sir, with God!" Then to the others: "A very proper and soldierly man. But as for this banishment that so many are hot on, it pleases me very little. The Jews are not fit for heaven, but they are most useful on earth, and when God sent the Gypsies wandering in punishment for not sheltering Our Lady and Saint Joseph, it is plain he saw the use they would be to the Spaniards. Shall we banish them and tell God we know better? They might serve very well in war to climb and be killed and fall so as to make an easy

ladder. I once saw a Gypsy sorcerer kill a man who came to seize him: talk of strength! swiftness, too,—for he vanished while we were crossing ourselves like—say, like——"

"Like a swift black snake," suggested Juan, without looking up from his lute.

"Why, did you see him?" asked the surprised silversmith.

"Not then, but now," answered Juan. "We have a Gypsy here in Bedmár whose frame has been so firmly compacted by nature that it would yield a dozen types: all the Spanish knights, every deity, and all hell's heroes writhe like demigods beside him."

"There, there, Juan, don't pause," laughed Mine Host. "More hyperbole. Shoot upward and flare into meteors before you sink back to the dull brown fact!"

"Nay, I prefer fact," said Blasco. "What is your Gypsy?"

Mine Host took upon himself the office of narrator as being more likely to deal in prose than Juan.

"He's chieftain of a band who are the Moor's allies," said he. "The Duke surprised them and brought them home as captives a month ago. He needed smiths and got them, and deprived the Moor of some archers at the same time. Juan's pleasure is to watch them forg-

ing and to talk with the chief, who, I'll wager, is nothing more than a piece of stalwart cunning."

"No!" broke in Juan, lustily. "My invention is too poor to fancy Zarca as I first saw him. He was stripped then. In his chieftain's gear and among his own men he was like a royal barb followed by wild Andalusian colts. He had a necklace of finest gold, and wore fine mail and a rich sword and belt. When they stripped him it was these poor things that lost grace, not he."

"Maybe," put in the cautious Blasco; "but nakedness is bad for trade,—then, it's not decent."

"Faith, wisely said!" cried Mine Host. "Purge your speech, Juan. It's over-full of this Gypsy. Praise the Catholic king, rather. But come now, let us go see this juggler's skill."

The time of day had come in Bedmár when color glows without glitter and every object bears a silent happiness in the evening light. The Plaça where the church, once a mosque, stood seemed to widen in the passive air. The ground gently sloped up to the church, which was girdled with low white houses. High above on the hill-tops towered a strong fortress and the castle wall. The breath of flowers and aromatic leaves spread over the roofs from cool, shadowed pátios, and fanned the dark

faces clustered about the central spot where Roldan performed his tricks.

Gilded balls began to play, and the juggler's form moved in graceful harmony. He was no longer the old Roldan, dull, hard, and weary; but, gloriously holding all eyes, he was king of the moment, saving when Annibal divided the scene and played the comic part in mimicry of his master. Pablo stood beside them holding his viol and awaiting the command to begin.

Juan and Mine Host, with Blasco, came up and found their way into the midst of the crowd. Lorenzo, indeed, knit them all into one family by showing all alike good will and recognition. Juan cast his glance around till it fell upon little Pepíta, the blondest maid in all Bedmár, with red hair and a saucy lip and nose.

The gilded balls soon ceased to play, and Annibal began to leap through the hoops. Then Roldan spread his carpet and showed strange feats of legerdemain. Next he tumbled, while Annibal imitated his antics, and as this was going on, Pablo began to play his viol. But, presently, he dropped his bow, as if carried away by the music into singing, and poured forth in a wondrous voice a ballad of Spring. He sang again and again, until, at last, some voices shouted, "The dance, the

dance!" Then Pablo again took up the bow, and Pepita, as ready as a bird that sees the corn sprinkled, put forth her foot at Juan's nod and smiles and sounded the castanets, which were held ready in her hands. Roldan, followed by Annibal, gathered pence among the scattering crowd, while the carpet still lay on the ground inviting tiptoeing feet.

Suddenly, with a gliding motion like a flame, a lithe figure, all robed in white and saffron, flashed across the circle, and paused with uplifted arms and a regal head in its midst.

Juan stood fixed and pale. Pepita stepped backward into the ring. The voices fell to more passive tones, half of welcome and half of astonishment.

"Lady Fedalma!" was the cry. "Will she dance with us?"

Swayed by a passionate impulse and feeling that all life was music, Fedalma moved like Miriam of old in a religious dance on the shore of the Red Sea. At first a reverent silence fell upon the crowd; but the admiring tension soon found relief in sighs of delight and low murmurs of applause. Even Juan succumbed to the impulse. He took up his lute and struck in with the melody, raised now and again to a clear flood by Pablo's sweet voice, which died away only too soon.

The exquisite hour, the ardor of the crowd, and the stirring notes of the music all urged Fedalma on. Earth and heaven seemed one to her, and life a gladness trembling on the outer edge of rapture. She moved more and more swiftly, and seemed each moment to glow with a more glorious presence. Circling about, she lightly bent and lifted her tambourine high up, making it ring and boom, then lifted it higher still, stretching her beautiful left arm to the utmost. The crowd shouted exultingly, forgetting poverty and care in the rich moment of possessing her.

But suddenly, at one point, the throng was pushed and hustled apart and something approached. It was the band of Gypsy prisoners. Soldiers were in front and at the rear, and the gallant Lopez walked aloof, commanding them. The Gypsies were chained in couples, all saving one, and walked in a dark file, with grand bare legs and arms, and a savage melancholy in their eyes that gleamed through their black clouds of hair. They came full into sight at last and stretched to the centre of the open space. Fedalma, with gentle wheeling sweeps, again faced the centre and swung about, her tambourine lifted high in the air. At that moment, with a stupendous throbbing like a solemn voice from the grave, the great passing

bell tolled to prayer. At its mighty beat the light seemed to sink as if awe-struck. Speech and action paused. Little children gazed with lips parted, and most of the men and women prayed. Not many of the soldiers prayed; but the Gypsies stood as unmoved as pagan statues with a proud level stare.

The one who was chained singly, at the head of the file, turned to face Fedalma. She stood motionless with her arm uplifted, guarding the tambourine lest, if it were too suddenly lowered, its jingle might mar the religious pause. She seemed to reverence the general prayer, though she did not pray herself, but stood gazing into the Gypsy's eyes. Those eyes were like the sadness of the world rebuking her.

Why does he look at her and she at him? His knit brow, inflated nostril, and scornful, compressed lips seemed to be a dark hieroglyph of her coming fate. Father Isidor had terrible eyes and was her enemy. She knew it and defied him. But this Gypsy,—was he her enemy too? She stood quelled. The impetuous joy in her veins seemed turned to awe and self-doubt. The brief minute stretched infinitely, filled with dreams by a dilated consciousness.

But now it was gone. The pious murmur ceased. The Gypsies moved onward at the

command of Lopez, and the careless noises blent confusedly away. The ring closed again, and many called for Pablo's music, while all eyes were turned towards the carpet. It lay bare and dim. Twilight was there. The bright lady had departed.

II.

Duke Silva had doffed his mail, and with it had laid aside the heavier cares of war. He had not seen Fedalma; but felt that he had now by hard work in the field earned the joy of wooing her; and, with the wonted observances of Spanish gentlemen, he sent to ask permission to do her homage.

As he sat one day in his handsome room in the castle, where among other rich furniture was a table on which lay a costly jewel-casket, some one knocked, and, being permitted to enter, the Prior of San Domingo came in.

"You look perturbed, my son," he said, in the grave voice of a priest. "Do I thrust myself between you and some beckoning intent that wears a more smiling face than my own?"

"Father, it is enough that you are here," said the Duke. "I await your commands; indeed, I should have sought an earlier audience."

"To give, I trust, good reasons for your

change of policy." The Prior shot a keen sidelong glance at the Duke.

"Strong reasons, father," was the answer.

"Ay, but are they good ones?" urged the Prior.

"I will submit them to your strict judgment," said the Duke. "Late despatches sent by the Count of Bavien, without prompting from me, have made the course which would have been rational peremptory. Without the forces furnished by allies the siege of Guadix would be madness. More than this, El Zagal has his eyes on this very town of Bedmár. In three weeks from this the Master and Lord of Aguilar will bring their forces. We shall catch the Moors in a trap. Those are my reasons, father."

"And they sound well," returned the Prior. "But rumor adds another: that you, commanding in the Holy War of God, pray Satan to retard the fight so that you may have time for feasting,—in short, that you may marry. That you, a Spanish duke, mean to wed like a clown!"

"Rumor grows eloquent on your lips, father," said the Duke, with half a reproach.

"Is she true?" persisted the Prior.

"Perhaps. I justify only my public acts, not my private joys," said Duke Silva.

"And yet you boast a conscience that controls you and watches your knightly honor," said the ecclesiastic, hotly. "You, a helpless slave, whose will is strangled by lust and blind passion. Oh, a famous conscience, believe me!"

"Pause there!" cried the Duke, sternly. "More would be too much even from holy lips. I own to no love but such as guards my honor, since it guards hers whom I love. I will suffer no foul words to stain the gift I mean to lay at her feet!"

"Verse-maker's talk!" exclaimed the Prior. "Your honor safe? Tell me, what honor has a man with double bonds,—a Christian knight married to an infidel?"

"An infidel!" The Duke spoke menacingly.

"Who may one day spurn the cross," went on the Prior, heedless of the interruption. "And you call that honor! Apostate's honor? —harlot's chastity? Iscariot's!"

"Strong words," said the Duke, "but they cannot scorch me. Fedalma is a daughter of the Church. She has been baptized and brought up in the faith."

"Ay, as a thousand Jewesses, who, nevertheless, are brides of Satan."

"Fedalma is no Jewess!" said the Duke, angrily.

"But she bears the marks of the unbaptized

races," persisted the Prior. "Her blood is as unchristian as the leopard's."

"Say as unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's before the angel spoke the All hail!"

The Prior smiled bitterly.

"Did I not speak the truth?" he cried. "Your passion already weaves blasphemies! And because of this woman, who is fit only to make sport for Moorish palaces,—a lewd Herodias——"

"Stop!" cried the Duke; "no other man, priest though he were, would have had his throat left free for the passage of such words! You think to scare my love from its resolution with bugbear names, as women frighten a child, and after that to profane Fedalma."

"Oh, there is no need," said the priest, scornfully. "She has profaned herself. Go see her dancing even now in the Plaça."

"It is false!" roared the Duke.

"Go prove it false, then." The Prior drew on his cowl and turned away.

Duke Silva rushed through the corridor to where Fedalma dwelt in the apartments of the old Duchess. He knocked at the door, and receiving no response, opened it, and found the rooms empty. He called, in a muffled voice, "Fedalma," then again, louder, for Iñez, the trusted nurse, then searched the terrace garden,

still calling at intervals. There was no answer, and he hurried back, giving orders to pages and ushers, as he went, that they should find the Lady Fedalma at once. He reached his room again, where the priest's menace seemed to linger in the air, snatched his cloak and plumed hat, and, scarce thinking why, grasped his poniard.

"Here, Perez!" he called; "hasten to Don Alvar; tell him Lady Fedalma must be found. She is lost. He must send every way. I myself am going to seek her in the town."

As Perez opened the door, then moved aside for the Duke's passage outward, Fedalma entered.

"Fedalma!" cried the Duke, half in joy that she had returned and yet half in anger at her absence.

"O my lord!" she said, innocently, "you have come back and I have been wandering!"

"You meant I should not know it," he said, coldly, but with suppressed agitation.

"Oh, no; I should have told you afterwards, as I told you of the birds I set free against your wish, else you would have hindered me," she said, archly.

The Duke spoke with haughty coldness:

"Will you tell me what prompting there was stronger than my wish which made you wander?"

Fedalma advanced a step towards him with a sudden look of anxiety.

"Are you angry?" she said.

"Angry?" The Duke smiled with bitterness. "A deeply-wounded man may be too much pained to feel anger."

"You—deeply wounded?"

"Have I not made your place and dignity the heart of my ambition, Fedalma? You alone can strike it mortally."

"No, no, Silva; some one has deceived you. I only went to see the world with Iñez,—see the town and the people. It was no harm. I did not mean to dance. It happened at last——"

"God, it is true, then! true that you flung yourself out on the dusty highway for common eyes to see!"

"Yes, it is true," she said. "The air was filled with music,—there was a song that seemed the voice of the eventide, a glowing light that seemed to be our love, mine and yours, Silva. It trembled through my limbs, and all the people shouted for the dance. I longed to dance before them,—nay, my dear lord, I danced,—there was no longing. And, once done, you must say it was not wrong. I pray you say so!"

Fedalma had gradually drawn near to Don

Silva, and as she spoke these last words, they fell into each other's arms in an embrace of forgiveness.

"Dangerous rebel!" said the Duke, holding both her hands in his. "If the world without were only as pure as the world within. But, dear, all eyes, even when they look on you, do not shed a blessing."

"Ah, no, no!" she said, sadly. "I meant to tell you how my dancing came to an end. There was one man among the rest, but *he* was first, with irons on his limbs. When the bell tolled and the people began to pray and stood, I pausing among them, then he looked at me. Oh, Silva, such a man! I thought he must have risen from the dark place of imprisoned souls to say that Christ had never come to them. His look found me there,—seemed to have travelled far to find me and chill my blood with the cold iron of unknown bonds. The joy in my veins was frozen. I danced no more. Who is he, Silva? Who are the prisoners with him? Are they Moors?"

"No, they are Gypsies,—strong and cunning knaves," said the Duke. "The man you mean is their chief. He is an ally of the Moors, and they will sorely miss him. Such dread was natural when he turned that savage glance on you. But forget it, dear. This hour is worth

whole days when we are apart. Danger urges us to make quick resolutions."

"What danger?" said Fedalma, with instant alarm.

"There is a dark enmity that is plotting to part us. Our only defence is a speedy marriage. It must be secretly done, then publicly declared. I beseech you, dearest, consent to this and trust me. There is great need. The bishop is my friend and furthers the marriage. Our priest will be despatched from Jaën to-night. I shall march out with a strong escort to meet him. Before the day after to-morrow, if you will, we may be wedded."

"Must it be in secret?"

"Nobody shall know it beforehand but Iñez and Don Alva. But when the vows have once been taken, my whole household shall acknowledge you as their duchess. No man can then aim a blow at you except through my breast. There, put the seal of your dear lips upon that."

She kissed him tenderly and looked earnestly into his eyes. Then breaking away, she stood at a little distance from him with a look of roguish delight.

"Now I am so glad I saw the town to-day before I became a duchess,—so glad I gave poor Fedalma all her wish!"

Don Silva drew her towards the jewel-casket on the table and opened it to her eager eyes.

"You know these jewels, Fedalma," said he. "They are precious signs of an honor long transmitted and ennobled through the generations by worthy bearing. I give them to you, now,—ask you to take them,—place the trust of our house in your keeping. These rubies,—see——"

Fedalma bent over the casket and looked at the jewels with womanly delight.

"Ah, I remember them!" she cried. "When I was a child I felt as if they were alive. I used to sit and look at them with awe. Now they will be mine!" She held them up in her ecstasy. "Come, I'll put them on. Help me, my lord."

Don Silva took up a jewel and placed it against her ear.

"Let us try," he said. "Take out your ear-ring, sweet."

She did so, and he put in the jewel.

"I was right," she said. "These rubies have life in them."

He was trying in vain to fasten the second ear-ring while she stooped over the casket. She raised her head with a laugh.

"Your lordly hands can never do it," she said. "Let me try."

"No, no," he said. "I like the task, but you must be still."

She stood perfectly still, clasping her hands together. Suddenly a clanking noise was heard outside. She started with an expression of pain.

"What is that sound, Silva?" she asked. "How cruel and jarring it is! Listen!" She tried to start away towards the window, but Don Silva detained her.

"Oh, it is nothing," he said. "Perhaps the workmen in the gallery."

"It is the sound of fetters!" she said. "Hark! they are passing along. I know it is those Gypsy prisoners. I saw them and heard their chains. Oh, my lord, do you not wish the world were different?"

"When the war is over it will be different. You, yourself, will change it by wedding me, dearest."

"I shall beg a great deal of kindness from you for those who are less happy," she said, gravely; then brightening: "Oh, I shall rule you, Silva!"

She broke away from him and returned to the jewels, taking up a necklace and clasping it about her throat, while he lifted a circlet of diamonds and rubies towards her head.

"But I shall persist in loving you," he said,

gayly. "Now take the coronet." He placed the circlet on her head.

She went to the casket again. "Here is gold, —a necklace of pure gold," she cried. "But you have worn this, my lord?"

"No, love," he answered, "I never wore it. Lay it down." Then joining both her hands and holding them up between his own, he said, "Why look at jewels any longer? Look at me now."

"Oh, you dear heaven!" she murmured, gazing up at him. "I should see nothing if you were gone!"

"But I must go this very night," he said. "And will you rise and wait for me at dawn?"

She nestled into his arms.

"I shall surely come," he said, "and then we shall be married. Farewell, love." And he kissed her and went away.

"Poor, poor gems!" she said, looking at the jewels. "Pray you, love me. Let us be glad together. And you, gold,"—she took up the gold necklace,—"will you love me, too? Will you be my amulet to keep me safe from hurtful eyes?" She spread it out, meaning to clasp it on her neck. Then paused, as if startled, and held it before her. "Why, it is magical! He says he never wore it, yet these twisted lines seem to bring me a message from

the dead past. Perhaps I have lived before in some strange world, and all this passionate love and pain are old memories."

While Fedalma was looking at the necklace Juan had entered unobserved.

"Señora," he said in a low voice.

She started and, gathering the necklace together, turned around.

"Oh, Juan, it is you!"

"I met the Duke," Juan explained, "and when he ordered some one to wait on you and carry a burden you would give him, I prayed leave to serve you. Don Silva owes me a score of wishes that I have never claimed, but this one of serving you weighs as much as all the rest together."

"That sounds well," she said. "You turn your speeches as prettily as your songs."

"Is not that the Gypsy's necklace?" He pointed to the jewel in her hand. "How curiously it is wrought——"

"The Gypsy's?" She turned with astonishment. "Do you know its history?"

"No farther back than when it was taken from the Gypsy chief's neck."

"What!" she asked, eagerly. "The one I saw in the Plaça?"

"Yes."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Something and nothing, lady. I have often talked with him. He seems to say much, yet he is a wizard who draws down rain by sprinkling,—casts out a sharp-hooked question that cannot fail to catch an answer."

"It's hard that such a man should be chained to work," she said, sadly.

"Oh, he is dangerous." Juan nodded his head to give emphasis to his words.

"I thought his eyes showed no hatred," said Fedalma. "If the Gypsies are savage beasts and must be hunted, let them be set free and have the benefit of the chase, or stand at bay and fight for life and their offspring. They may well hate cages as I hate them. I will beg the Duke to release them."

"Pardon me, lady," insinuated Juan. "But what if the Duke does not love to hear of Gypsies?"

"Oh, I am brave, and so cunning! I always prevail. But now, honored Troubadour, if you will be servant to your pupil, carry out this casket—no, not the necklace. Iñez will be there."

Juan went out, and Fedalma again took up the necklace, murmuring over it words which showed anew how deeply its owner's fate had touched her heart. She vowed to herself that, with or without the Duke's consent, he should

be free. But the Duke would consent The Duchess Fedalma might do what she would.

III.

FEDALMA, splendidly dressed and adorned with pearls and rubies, was walking up and down a large chamber opening on a terrace-garden. The trees were visible through the window in the faint moonlight, which also cast a fair halo over the rich interior. Flowers were hanging about the windows, lit up dimly by tapers, while the casket of jewels lay open on a table. She paused by a window to gather some jasmines, then resumed her walk, sometimes musing silently, sometimes murmuring her thoughts in low, unconscious words.

Suddenly something fell behind her. She turned quickly to see what it was. A little bird had fallen on the floor. She took it up and found it still warm. There was a strip of linen tied under its wing. It was streaked with blood she thought at first, then found the stains were written words. They read:

"Dear child, Fedalma, be brave, give no alarm,—your father comes!"

She let the bird fall.

"My father—comes," she said, scarce heeding the meaning of the words. She turned in quivering expectation towards the window.

Nothing was there and all was silent. But in an instant Zarca appeared. He entered noiselessly, then stood still at his full height some distance from Fedalma.

"It is he!" she murmured, in an awe-stricken voice.

"You know who I am, then?" he asked.

"The prisoner I saw in the Plaça," she said. "And this necklace?"

"It was played with by your little fingers when it hung about my neck fifteen years ago," he said, gravely yet tenderly.

Fedalma looked at the necklace, then spoke as if to herself:

"Fifteen years ago!"

"The very day I lost you, when you wore a tiny gown of scarlet cloth embroidered with gold. It was clasped in front by two gold coins. The one on the left was split in two right across the king's head. You see I know it all by heart."

Fedalma grew paler and trembled again. "Yes. It is all true," she said. "I have the gown, the clasps, the braid,—all true! but they are sorely tarnished: it was so long ago!"

"It seems but yesterday to me," said Zarca, "for, till to-day, you have always been as that little child. You were not all stolen. You had a double life fed from my heart."

Fedalma let fall the necklace and made an impulsive movement towards him with outstretched hands.

He reached his arms to welcome the caress; but Fedalma drew back before she had touched him.

"How did you know me—no, I mean, how did you lose me?" she asked, pathetically.

"Poor child!" he answered. "Your father and his rags are welcome. That is well."

Fedalma looked at him with admiration. Her whole heart was moved towards him.

"I lost you by accident," he went on. "Marauding Spaniards swept like a storm near to our camp, and snatched you up when your nurse, Zino, as she confessed, had gone to the stream for a drink. I never saw you again until you danced in the Plaça to-day,—making sport for your people's enemies."

"It was not for sport!" she cried, vehemently. "I danced for joy,—for love of the whole world. When you looked at me my joy was stabbed with your pain." Then with a new impulse: "But how were you sure I was your child?"

"I had talked with one named Juan. I learned how you had been brought up by the Spaniards, and had grown to such perfection that the Duke had wooed you for his Duchess. Then I knew you were the child that Lambra

bore me an hour before the Christians had hurried her to death. Therefore I came to claim you, not from the Spaniard, but from yourself."

Fedalma sank on her knees before him with a low sob. He stooped to kiss her brow and laid his hands on her head.

"Then my child owns her father?" he said.

"Father!" she murmured. "I will eat dust before I deny the flesh I spring from."

"There spoke my true daughter. Away with these rubies!" He seized the circlet and flung it on the ground.

Fedalma started up with strong emotion and shrank backward.

"Such a crown is infamy around a Zincala's brow!" he cried.

Fedalma stood silent over against him, gazing into his face. Presently she said, falteringly,—

"Then—I—was born—a Zincala?"

"Of blood as unmixed as virgin juice," he answered, proudly.

"Of a race more outcast and despised than the Moor or Jew," she muttered.

"A race never taught by a prophet how to make their name, now but a badge of scorn, a glorious banner to stir the air they breathe with pride. My destiny is to guide them forth to a new land where they shall kindle our

first altar-fire from settled hearths. The land is waiting for them, and they await me, their chief, who am a prisoner. All depends on you, my child."

Fedalma rose and looked solemnly at him.

"Your child is ready, father!" she said.

Then she told him how, on the morrow, she was to wed the Duke secretly, and when this was done she would declare her birth before the whole household, and so win his freedom.

"And the Duke,—he will be your son," she said. "He will send you forth with honors. Then I'll clasp this badge on you before them all and lift my brow for you to kiss. I will cry aloud, 'I glory in my father!'"

Zarca smiled sadly. He showed her how hopeless was such a course, and she drew back discouraged. She mused a little, then spoke what was in her heart. Silva's love for her was stronger than all hate. He could never hate the race which bore what he loved best in the world. To-morrow, after she was married, all the Gypsies should be set free.

"Too late, my child," said Zarca. "Too poor a service. The woman who hopes to save her tribe must not expect to do it by easy prayers in her lover's ear. You were born in the dark man's tent and lifted up in sight of the whole

tribe, who greeted you with shouts of joy. Yours is other work, Fedalma."

"What work,—what is it you demand of me?" she asked, in wonder.

"A fatal deed," he answered.

A new thought entered her mind. He meant to part her from the Duke. She was sorely distressed, and spoke passionately of her love for him.

"I know well the first wail of spirits called to a great destiny," said Zarca. "It is in vain, my daughter! Lay the young eagle in whatever nest you may, the cry of the eagles overhead vibrate prophetically through its frame till it spreads its wings and poises itself for flight. This is what you must do. My comrades are filing off their chains in a low turret by the battlements, where we are locked. We had files hidden in our shaggy hair and ropes in our clothes. I found a friend among the jailers, who loves the Gypsy as ally of the Moor. Now, listen: By yonder terrace there is a narrow stairway cut in the rock. At one point in its straggling course it branches off towards a low wooden door that looks like one piece with the rock. Open that door; it leads through a broad passage underground a good half-mile out to the open plain. It was made for escape in case of siege. You know the number of the steps

that lead to the door, and the secret of the bolt. You will open that door and fly with us."

Fedalma receded a little and gathered herself up in an attitude of resolution.

"No, I will never fly," she said. "Never forsake the chief half of my soul where my love lies! I swear to set you free, but do not ask more than that; it is impossible. Wait till the morning and I will win your freedom openly. Silva will deny me nothing."

"Till you ask for what he is powerless to give," said Zarca, contemptuously. "The soldiers even now murmur that he risks the town to marry a bride too low for him. They'll murmur louder if captives like us are freed. Nay, murmurs may turn at last to the dagger, for your Duke has a pious cousin for his heir."

"Then I will set you free now!" she said, firmly. "It may put my marriage off, but——"

"You cannot free us and go back to him," Zarca said.

"Why?"

"I would compel you to go forth."

"You tell me that?"

"Yes; for I'd have you choose!"

"I owe only a daughter's allegiance, not a slave's," she said, haughtily.

"You belong to your tribe!" He spoke as a chieftain rather than a father.

"No! I belong to him who loves me, and whom I love!"

Zarca reproached and mocked her by turns, appealed to her native instincts, and dwelt upon the sufferings of his people left without a leader or an heir to his line. She melted under his fiery words and knelt at last, praying him to carry her away by force rather than make her choose. He told her that his thirty followers were assembled outside on the terrace, and that he, her father, waited for her to lead them forth to liberty.

"Now choose to save or destroy. Say you will curse your race!" he cried.

"No, no, I will not say it. I will go. I will not take a heaven haunted by shrieks of misery. I can never shrink back into bliss. My heart has grown too big with the things that might be. Some happier bride shall wear these jewels." She sank on a seat and took off the rubies and pearls. "Now, good gems, we are to part," she said. "Speak tenderly of me always to Silva." Then to Zarca: "I will strangle this yearning self, father. I will wed the curse that blights my race. Come now, I am ready."

But he bade her write to the Duke; and murmuring the while that Silva would know, would understand her, she wrote what Zarca suggested:

"Silva, my only love: he has come,—my father. I am the daughter of a Gypsy chief who means to be the savior of our tribe. He calls on me to live only for his great end; nay, to die for it. I die in leaving you: all that lives henceforth is the poor Zincala."

She rose when she had written this.

"Father, now I am ready to wed my people's lot," she said, sadly.

"To wed a crown!" he cried. "We will make our people's lot royal! Come, my Queen!"

As she started to go her eye caught her betrothal ring.

"Stay," she said; "one kiss,—farewell! O love, you were my crown. All others are but thorns on my poor woman's brow."

IV.

In a hollow between the hills, far southward from Bedmár, and where the Moorish watch-towers stand like tall white sails on a shadowy green bay, there was a cluster of swarthy little tents such as our fathers raised of old on the Asian plains. They swarmed close together about two taller tents, and in their midst there was busy and bright-eyed life: tall girls feeding goats; women with babes; tiny urchins crawling about or gurgling forth their infant gayety; lads lying sphinx-like on their elbows, their

black manes tossed back, as they flung up the coin and watched its fall; others running to plague their grandsires, who returned with rabbits slung on their backs, guiding the fruit-laden mules.

On a pleasant spot somewhat removed from the hubbub lay Juan asleep. The sly maidens of the camp were tiptoeing about him with ill-suppressed fun, stealing piece by piece his discarded apparel. He awoke at a more audacious sally than usual and looked sleepily about him. The young thieves leaped away, and he threatened them without moving. Then at last he took up his lute and played a few notes. The bare brown feet could not resist. But he stopped abruptly, and would not go on until one of his belongings had been returned. So by alternate playing and stopping he regained his hat, his feather, his belt, his scarf, his buttons, and his rosettes. Then Hinda ran up, crying, "Our Queen, our Queen!" Juan adjusted his garments and his lute, and Fedalma approached, wearing a Moorish dress, her black hair hanging around her in plaits, and a dagger at her side. She carried a scarf on her left arm, which she held up as a shade.

Juan knelt to take up the edge of her cymar, and kissed it.

"You look sad, lady," he said.

"I am sick at heart, my good Juan, and you are cruel. You choose to hide something I long to know."

"I, lady?"

"You! You know how many leagues this camp lies from Bedmár, what mountains are between, and could, if you would, tell me about the Duke: that he is comforted, and sees how he has gained by losing the Zincala,—no, that is false! He could never think lightly of our love."

Juan assured her that he knew nothing, that her father trusted no secrets to the echoes, and that of late his movements had been hidden from all. Then the troubadour offered to sing, but she thanked him, saying her soul was clogged with self: she could not listen.

"Leave me in this green spot, Juan; but come again with the lengthening shadows."

As Juan wandered along the stream, there came a ringing shout from the tents. Fedalma rose at once and listened. It was her father. She saw him advancing. When he came near her a sudden sunshine was sent forth from his terrible eyes. He tenderly laid his hand on her shoulder and kissed her brow.

He told her that he had stolen the time, and made a forced march to see her and give her tidings of promise. Berber ships were to take them to Africa, with abundant spoil, won

bravely by service done on the Spaniards. El Zagal trusted him, rated his counsel high, and desired him to plead his cause in Africa. Thus the Moor was the more willing to further their pilgrimage.

They talked of the future, which was to be so brave, to fulfil so many dreams, and of their people, whom they loved; then, at last, he went from her to the tents to give his orders to Nadar, his lieutenant, before hastening back.

"The stars and young moon must see me at my post," he said. "But you must rest here. Farewell, my younger self,—shall I live in you when the earth covers me?"

"Death should make your will divine to me," she said, fervently. "Kiss me now, and when you see fair hair, oh, be pitiful!"

He embraced her and strode away. After watching him disappear among the tents, she seated herself on the bank, leaned her head forward, and covered her face with her drapery.

While she mused thus, a figure came out from the olive-trees and paused at seeing her there, then slowly moved forward with careful steps. A voice said, gently,—

"Fedalma!"

Fearing that fancy had overcome her senses, she quivered and rose up, but did not turn.

"Fedalma, it is Silva!"

Then she turned. He beamed on her like morning, with bare head and entreating arms. She paused one instant, then, with a motion as inevitable as a stream's, she found rest on his bosom.

"O love," she murmured, "you are living and believe in me!"

"Once more we are together!" he said, with deep emotion.

"You did not hate me, then,—think me an ingrate,—that I forsook you?"

"Dear, I trusted you as holy men trust in God. You had the less trust, because you suspected mine. 'Twas wicked doubt."

"Nay; when I saw you hating me, the fault seemed in my lot,—my bitter birthright. Then I said, It is better so. He will be happier! But that thought struggling to be a hope ended in tears."

"It was a cruel thought, Fedalma. Happier! True misery is not begun until I cease to love you."

"Silva!"

They stood a moment or two in silence.

"But tell me how you came?" she asked. "Where are your guards? Is there no risk? and—now I look—this is a strange garb."

"I came alone."

"Alone!"

"Yes,—fled in secret. There was no other way to find you safely."

She let one hand fall and moved a little from him with a look of terror. Then he clasped her more firmly with the other arm.

"Silva!" she murmured, in dread.

"It is nothing," he returned. "I am here, and that is enough. Now we will cling together, and no power can hinder us!"

"Our joy is dead and only smiles on us," she sighed.

"Is your love growing faint, then?" he asked, half playfully. "Love supreme defies dream-terrors and avenging fires. I have risked all things. But your love is faint-hearted, dearest."

"Silva," she said, with resolution, "if a naked sword came between us,—if it severed my arm and left our two hands clasped,—even then this poor maimed arm would feel the clasp till death. What parts us is a sword——"

As if in fulfilment of her words a naked blade was on the instant thrust between them. Don Silva let go her hand and grasped his sword. Fedalma started at first, but stood firmly anon, as if prepared to interpose between the combatants.

It was Zarca, who had stolen up unseen behind them, and who now spoke scornfully to the Duke.

"Ay, it is a sword baptized in Christian blood that parts the Spaniard and the Zincala. My Lord Duke, I was a guest in your fortress once, against my will. I had entertainment like a galley-slave. Have you come to the Zincala's camp for a fit return? or to make amends?"

"Chief," said the Duke, calmly, "I have brought no scorn to answer yours with. I came because love urged me,—love for her whom you call your daughter."

"Doubtless you bring your men-at-arms for the final argument?" insinuated the chief.

"I came alone," said Don Silva, fearlessly. "The only force I bring with me is tenderness."

Thus, with manly simplicity and courage on the one side and fierce suspicion on the other, the two enemies continued their colloquy, half forgetful of the innocent cause of it, who stood at their side. Don Silva at last grew passionate in his appeal.

"This sweet virgin," he cried, "reared like the garden flowers to give the sordid world a glimpse of perfection,—you snatch her away and thrust her out in dreary wilds,—and for what? You say you would be the savior of your tribe,—say, rather, you have the will to save men by ruling them, and the first wound you make with that flinty will is a gash in your own child's bosom!"

"You are loud, my lord," said the Gypsy, with calm irony. "You have a heart,—I, none. Fedalma's good is what you care for, while I seek her ruin. She is my only offspring. If she can leave her tribe for silken shame, then let her go! Now choose, Fedalma!"

Her choice was made slowly as her father spoke. She moved from where she stood between them with pleading hands, to choose the sublime pain of duty. She was wrought upon by awe. Her own brief life seemed but a little island very remote through the visions of the wide world about it. She stood apart from both, yet near her father.

"My lord, farewell," she said, tenderly. "It was well we met once again. Now we must part. I think we had the whole of love's joy in knowing we loved each other."

"I thought we loved with a love that clings till death," he said, with imploring arms stretched out.

"Silva," she murmured, "it is fate. Farewell, dear; I must go to my people."

She reached forth the tender hands which had so often lain in his; but he stood as still as death. The chief was silent and unchangeable.

"No," said Silva, at last. "I can never take those hands and then let them go forever."

"It must be," she said.

"My Lord Duke," broke in the impatient chief, "I have given room for speech, because I desired my daughter should make her own choice. But now all further words are idle. You are here with the safe-conduct of the trust you showed us in coming unguarded, but you must now accept our escort back to the Moorish bounds."

"I faced all risks to find Fedalma," said the Duke, "and I here declare that I choose to abide with her and adopt her lot, only claiming fulfilment of her vows to be my wife."

Fedalma wrestled herself from her father and stood opposite the Duke with a look of terror.

"No, Silva, no!" she cried. "You could not live so. You shall not spring from your high place!"

"Yes, I have said it!" he replied, deliberately; then turning to Zarca: "And you, chief, are bound by her vows!"

The chief was softened by the Duke's noble purpose; yet he painted in grim colors all the hazards and sacrifices of the lot he had chosen. Nothing, however, could shake Silva's resolution. His heart swayed all things, and his heart was given to Fedalma.

When Zarca had exhausted all his arguments of dissuasion, he strode towards the camp to

prepare his followers for the ceremony of admitting Don Silva to their fellowship. The Duke caught Fedalma's hands; but she seemed dazed by what he had spoken, and pleaded with him to retreat while there was time. But his resolution was fixed. Life, he said, would be no gain to him if he were robbed of her. He would go straight to the Moorish walls, challenge their bravest, and seek death.

As they talked together in a calmer mood, the chief approached, bringing his swarthy followers. When their ceremonies were finished, Don Silva solemnly took the vows and was adopted into the tribe.

V.

There was a great crowd of soldiers and towns-people in the Plaça Santiago at Bedmár. They gathered about the central space, but on the higher ground in front of the church there was a stake with fagots heaped around it, and a gibbet. As the crowd swayed impatiently back and forth, the chief, Zarca, came into its midst accompanied by a small band of armed Zincali. He wore the Gypsy badge over the dress of a Moorish captain. The Moorish king, in whose service the chief had borne arms at the capture of Bedmár, had given him command of the town and fort.

Zarca addressed the throng, and swayed them with a fiery eloquence. He appealed to their hatred of the Duke and of Father Isidor. They greeted him with huzzas and cries of "Long life to Zarca!"

In the midst of the cheering Nadar appeared, and advanced towards his chief till he was near enough to speak with him in an undertone. He told Zarca he had obeyed his commands, that he had brought his band and the Spanish prisoner.

"But the sleek hound who slipped his collar off to join the wolves——" growled Nadar.

"What of him?"

"He is raging at the fall of the town; says all his friends are butchered. I'd sooner be the dog of a murdered Gypsy and howl for him, than be this Duke!"

"There! Enough!" said the chief. "Did you give him my command to wait in the castle till I saw him?"

"Yes; but he defied me, and broke away. He may soon be here. I came to warn you. He will surely work us harm!"

"Do not fear," said Zarca. "The road I travel by has no surprises. But you were right, Nadar, for here he comes." The chief pointed across the crowd to Silva, who approached bareheaded, carrying an unsheathed sword.

The Gypsy badge was still on his breast where he was wont to wear the cross. He came onward as if driven by some invisible chase, straight to Zarca.

"Chief, you are treacherous, cruel!" he cried. "It was a bitter wrong to conceal this from me, to stand with waking eyes and see me shed the blood of my kin in a dream. You never warned me that you were allied with the Moor to take my town, slay the heir of my house, and my friend and chosen brother. You have desecrated the very church where my mother once held me in her arms——!"

"I warned you of the consequences of your oath and you did not shrink," answered Zarca. "I am no priest to keep consciences. I keep my own place and my own command. Should I, because of one unstable Spaniard, quit my ends, renounce my daughter and the hope of my people?"

"Your daughter!" wailed the Duke. "Oh, great God! I am mad. The past will never change. Chief,—this stake. Tell me who is to die! The town is yours. Let me save my——"

"Peace!" cried Zarca. "Here is the prisoner."

Every one turned to see him. It was Father Isidor. He was bareheaded and frocked; but a rope was around his neck. He bore a crucifix in his hand, and gazed earnestly on it, his

lips moving in constant prayer. His guards parted in front and paused as they approached the centre where the stake was. He lifted his eyes then to look around him, calmly prepared to speak his last words of willingness to die. But his glance met Silva's, and it drew him from his holy contemplation. Silva moved forward in penitence, and would have knelt before the man who was still one with all the sacred things that now came back upon him. But the Father would not permit him to kneel. He thrust the cross, with a deprecating gesture, before the Duke, and his pale face flashed forth a horror at Silva's act.

"Back from me, defile me not!" he cried. "Thou foulest murderer! Fouler than Cain, for thou hast opened the gate for wolves to come through and tear the weak and strong alike. I warned you of this end. Oh, most wretched mortal! whose memory shall be of oaths broken for lust. I turn my eyes forever from you. The stake is ready. I also am ready."

"It shall never be!" cried the Duke. He raised his sword and rushed in front of the guards, who were advancing. "If you are human, chief, hear my demand!"

"Stand aside! Put up your sword!" said Zarca. "You vowed obedience to me as your chief. It was your latest vow."

"No! If he must burn, hew me from the spot! Fasten me among the fagots!"

"His fate is fixed!" said Zarca, with an imperious wave of the hand to the Gypsy guard. They closed about the Prior and led him up to the gibbet behind the chief.

Then Silva sheathed his weapon. He strode up to Zarca and proudly demanded to suffer in place of the priest.

"Slake your hate upon me," he cried, "and I will thank you."

"I am your chief," said Zarca. "I do not hate you. To me you are but a Zincala in revolt."

"I am no Zincala! I took the name in madness! I disown it! Look! I tear this badge away. I am a Catholic knight, a Spaniard who will die like a Spaniard!"

As the Duke tore off the badge and trampled it under his feet, he heard a shout which arrested his fury. He could not tell whether it bore him a threat or not; but he looked up with joy, seeking a foe to wreak his rage upon. His eye caught the form of Father Isidor swinging aloft in convulsive throes. Then he knew the shout to be the exultation of the crowd over the death of a malefactor, and, in his fevered mind, the white-frocked body served to accuse him of murder. It was a symbol of his guilt,

and stirred tremors within him until then dormant.

With a sudden snatch at something hidden in his breast, he bore down upon the chief. Zarca fell under his impetuous thrust. The Duke heard neither the Gypsies shriek nor felt their fierce grasp. As he staggered back, Zarca's words were alone audible to him.

"Call my daughter!" he groaned as he fell.

Nadar rushed to the chief's side and held him in his arms.

"Tie the Spaniard to the stake!" he cried, as the Gypsies leaped upon Silva.

They swiftly did as the Lieutenant commanded, then gathered about their fallen leader, hushed and eager to save the life so precious to their cause. The outer circle spoke only in low murmurs. Some climbed to perilous places, striving to see where the colossal life lay panting away.

The morning cast its blue shadows across the white walls above, and with a clear-cut line as relentless as the dial-hands, measured the shrinking hours. All the while the silent time-beat in each heart ached in deep pulsations.

Suddenly the outer crowd moved open and a cry went up:

"She is coming! She is coming!"

As swiftly as on that evening not so long

ago, when she had danced there, Fedalma came rapidly across the square. But now it was woe that brought her. She had divined all: the stake with the Duke bound upon it; her father wounded on the ground. She was born to this, she thought. Her father summoned her a second time to her life-task.

She knelt down by Zarca. He raised himself, and his eyes flashed upon her face a light as from a waning star which flames out anew in dissolution.

"My daughter," he said, painfully, "you have promised,—you will live only to save our people? I carry here"—he pointed to his bosom—"written pledges from the Moor that he will keep faith in Spain and Africa. Your weakness may be stronger than my strength. You will win more love. I cannot tell what the end will be. I held my people's good in my heart. Now I deliver it to you. Rise up and tell our people that I wait—in pain. I cannot die until I hear them vow to obey you."

She pressed her lips solemnly on his brow as if to seal her pledges. Then she rose firmly and met her people's eyes with a gaze flashing as darkly as their own.

"Your chief is dying!" she said in a clear voice. "I, his daughter, live to do his will. He asks you to promise now to obey me, your

queen, that we may gain the land he has won for us."

A shout of assent arose which sharpened into cries that seemed to plead with death.

"We will obey our queen! Our chief shall not die!" and they pressed about her, striving to kiss the hem of her gown. She raised a hand to quiet them.

"Hush! Your chief speaks!"

Zarca grasped at Nadar's arm and spoke loud, like one who has fought and conquered.

"Let the Spaniard loose! Give him his sword. He cannot do more vengeance. His soul is locked between two opposing crimes."

Having uttered this, the chief sank back again, his breast heaving violently.

"My daughter," he groaned, "lay your arm under my head—so; bend and breathe on me. I cannot see you. Night has come. Be strong —remember—I can only—die."

His voice went out into silence, but his breast continued to heave and moan. Its broad strength kept a life that saw and heard nothing saving what once had been and what might be in days and realms far onward. She bent above him unceasingly, though she knew that hurrying feet had gone to do his behest. In her soul she felt that he who had been its lord was being jarred with loosened cords, but

these could never relax the torture of his anguish. She knelt there clinging with piety and awed resolution beside this altar of her father's life, seeing long travel under the solemn sun stretch beyond it. She never turned her eyes, yet she felt that Silva passed by her. She beheld his face, vivid and pale, imploring her across fathomless black waters.

As the Duke passed the Gypsies made a wide pathway and shrank aloof from him, as if they dreaded to touch a thing they hated. Hate, growing triumphant, and mastering them, might tear and crush in spite of the hindering will. He walked slowly, as if reluctant to be safe and bear a dishonored life, which nobody assailed. The Plaça was silent, as if it had hushed itself to hear his footsteps and the chief's dying breath. And yet he could not pass without pausing an instant to look at her. With a glance at her averted head he turned and went away, carrying with him forever her murdered love.

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